THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S

Mystery Magazine®

160 PAGES

02057

JULY 1977 $1.00
#404

14 stories– 13 NEW

Michael Gilbert
Isaac Asimov
Hugh Pentecost
Ruth Rendell
L. Fish
l D. Hoch
s Walsh
rrars
's
y
tter

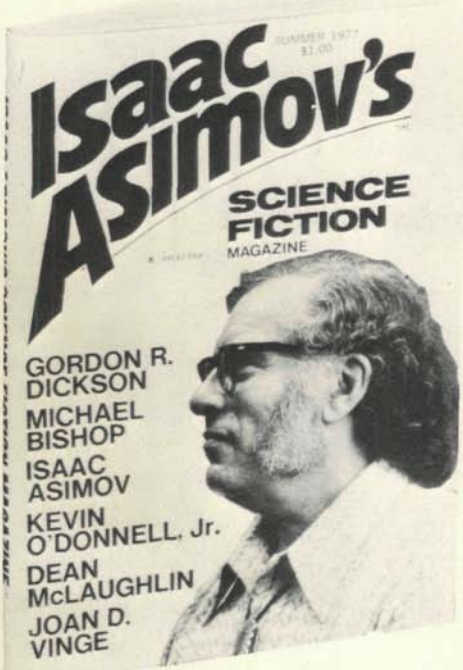
27 43 4528 ROY466TRH-2 MAY79
PROF HALSEY ROYDEN
13466 THREE FORKS
LOS ALTOS HLS CA 94022

ICATION

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's new! And it's from Isaac Asimov!

The Science Fiction magazine you've been waiting for —by the most respected and prolific writer in the field. Published quarterly. The most and best in SF in every issue you could expect. And you'd expect that from Asimov.



Four-issue subscription delivered to your doorstep—now for only $4.00.

EXTRA COUPON ON PAGE 48

TO: ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE
Box 1855 GPO, New York, NY 10001

EQMM 777

☐ **I enclose $4.00 (includes shipping and postage) for 4 issues of ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. (In Canada and all other countries, $5.00)**

Name (please print)

Address

City State Zip

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the proceeds. If you hand the stuff over to a fence, what's the going rate? Twenty-five per cent of the value, if you're lucky. And always a chance that the fence will shop you, to save his own hide."

"You sound like a disillusioned burglar," said Milo. "What's the alternative?"

"Ship it abroad. You can get good prices in Ostend, Amsterdam, and the Hague, for the sort of stuff they were lifting—jewelry, gold, old silver, watches, guns, cameras. And less chance of discovery all round. It only needed organizing."

"Do we know the organizer?"

"I know his name," said Petrella. "He's a gentleman called Captain Crabtree. And that's all anyone does know about him."

"How do we know that much?"

"About six months ago someone lifted a collection of gold coins and medals from Carfew's. It was shipped abroad, no question about it. The insurance reward was so big that if the stuff had been in this country, someone would have 'found' it for sure. The night after it happened, three young tearaways got lit up in a pub down by the docks. One of them—his name was Fred Carling—said, 'No one's going to see that little lot again. Captain Crabtree's looking after it.' One of our snouts was in the bar and heard him."

"It sounds a bit thin to me," said Milo.

"You haven't heard the end of the story. Next day when Fred turned up at work, he had two lovely black eyes and a tooth missing. Now, the point is that Fred is a pretty fair boxer. To mark him like that would have needed several people. Say, two to hold him and one to hit him. *And Fred never made any complaint to anyone.* He accepted his punishment and he accepted it without a squeak."

"Just like a public school, really," said Milo.

Captain Crabtree came under discussion at the conference which was held every Monday at District Headquarters. Chief Superintendent Watterson was in the chair.

"He's running a regular export agency," said Petrella. "There are dozens of ways of getting round the Waterguard and the Docks Police. They can't search every member of the crew every time he goes on board. And if they don't want to run even that risk, there's nothing to stop them postponing delivery until the ship's been cleared and is lying off, waiting for the tide. Run a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

small boat out to her. If all the crew are in the game, the officers won't know a thing."

"What makes you think it's organized on that scale, Patrick?"

"Our fences are beginning to squeak."

Watterson guffawed. He found it difficult to get upset over the troubles of receivers of stolen goods. "They've probably got a union," he said. "Why don't they go on strike?"

"It's no laughing matter, sir," said Petrella. "You know as well as I do there are only two ways we catch thieves. Either someone squeaks and there's not much chance of that here—"

"They're a tight-lipped crowd," agreed Chief Inspector Loveday who looked after the Borough.

"—or we trace the actual goods back to them. But if the stuff's all going abroad, we lose that chance as well."

But Watterson was in too good a humor to allow himself to be depressed by Petrella. He said, "There's a third way of catching them, Patrick. Luck."

It happened that same evening.

The two boys had taken a lot of trouble over getting into Mr. Plowman's pawnbroking establishment. Barry had a brother who had worked there for a few months, and had found out all about the alarms on the doors and windows—alarms which sounded in the charge room at Patton Police Station, 200 yards away. Rex had had the idea. There was an empty office above the dry-cleaning establishment two doors along from Plowman's. They had broken into this in the quiet hour before the pubs shut and had then waited patiently. They knew that the police patrol went past at one o'clock and again at five. It gave them four hours.

A trap door at the head of the stairs took them up onto the roof. After they had watched the one o'clock patrol go by, they crawled along the leads, fastened the rope they had brought with them to a pipe, and climbed down again to first-story level. This brought them opposite the window of Mr. Plowman's office, which was over the shop.

They had to take a chance on whether an alarm had been fixed to this window. There hadn't been one when he was there, Rex said, and he was usually reliable about things like that. Barry kicked in the glass with his foot, slipped the catch, and they climbed through. The door into the passage was locked, but since the lock was on the inside this was no obstacle. Five minutes later they were in the shop itself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Here there were drawers and locked showcases to be dealt with. The work was slow because they had to keep out of the direct line of sight from the shop window, which was brightly lit all night—a form of advertisement which Mr. Plowman thought worth the electricity bills he incurred.

It took three hours to fill the satchels they had brought with them. Rex said, "What about that little lot, eh? Just for finishers."

It was the window display. Engagement rings, ladies' watches, earrings, and brooches—all good stuff, guarded only by a sliding glass panel—held in place by a tiny lock.

"Pity to leave it," said Barry. It had been half an hour since anyone had gone past in the silent street outside. "Break the glass, grab what we can, and scarper. Right?" He swung the heavy case opener which he had been using.

This was when their luck deserted them. The breaking of the glass set off one of the alarms. They heard the car coming.

"Out!" said Rex.

They raced upstairs, slinging the heavy satchels round their shoulders as they went, climbed out of the office window, and dropped into the yard behind the shop at the moment the police car squealed to a halt and three men tumbled out.

Sergeant Blencowe, who was an experienced man, said, "Two of you round the back, quick." He then got busy on the car radio and called up two more cars.

What followed was a game of chess. The boys knew the board, but Sergeant Blencowe knew the moves. Ten breathless minutes later one of the three police cars cruising along West Road spotted two figures scuttling down East Bank Street, alongside the Creek.

"Got 'em now," said the driver and spoke briefly on his radio. The area between the Creek, the river, and the abandoned dock was, as he knew, a cul-de-sac. Two of the cars blocked the only two roads in as the third shot down East Bank Street in pursuit.

But the boys had disappeared.

Ten minutes later, when Sergeant Blencowe was scratching his bald head and swearing, a launch of the Thames Division on routine patrol saw two objects bobbing in the water. The Sergeant in charge swung his spotlight and identified them as two sleek heads. "Odd time to have a bath," he said.

"No law against it," said Barry as he was hauled aboard. They were taken to Leman Road Police Station and searched. Nothing was found on either of them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"All the same, we're taking you in," said the Sergeant. He had been listening in on the Q Division net.

On the following afternoon Petrella strolled down East Bank Street with Milo Roughead.

"We had to let them go," Petrella said. "No one got a clear identification. All they could be charged with was midnight bathing, which isn't a crime yet."

"I suppose they dumped the stuff in a friendly house," said Milo. "They'd just have enough time if they were quick."

"I expect they did," said Petrella. "And if we could get two hundred search warrants we might find it. Or again, we might not. As a matter of fact, I'm not so interested in where they put the stuff. What I'd like to find out is where they went into the river. They hadn't time to do anything elaborate like picking locks or cutting their way through barbed wire. The launch picked them up off the East Quay, a few minutes after they were seen running down this street. They must have gone almost straight into the water and it can't have been much lower down than this. The tide was on the ebb. They couldn't fight current and tide. They'd just go down with it and pretty fast. They must have gone in two or three hundred yards *above* where they were picked up."

"Not many possibilities," agreed Sergeant Roughead. The strip of ground on their left, between East Bank Street and the Creek, belonged to a marine engineering works. It had a high wall topped with broken glass. When they reached the point where the Creek ran into the river, the road swung to the right. On their left was a line of derelict houses, guarded by a fence of corrugated iron sheets, the tops cut into points, an awkward obstacle to surmount even in daylight and with the help of a ladder. A hundred yards along were the railings of the deserted dockyard, topped by a triple row of barbed wire.

"We've come too far," said Petrella. "If they did go in here, the current would have carried them a lot farther down. We'll go back."

At the point where East Bank Street turned through a right angle and ran along the river, there was a gate in the wall which they had overlooked, with a board on the wall beside it. The lettering was weather-worn and difficult to read.

"The Church of St. Barnabas, Lower Dock. Holy Communion on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sundays at 8 a.m. Evensong at 6.30 p.m." And underneath, "Arthur Sabine M.A., Rector."

"Good Lord. Yes," said Petrella. "That's old Sabine's church. Let's have a look at it."

They pushed open the gate, which had neither lock nor bolt, and saw in front of them, on the rising ground, at the point where the Creek ran into the river, a space of well-mown grass and in the middle of it a small neat building topped by a disproportionately high spire. The construction was red brick, weathered to the color of old burgundy, with ashlar-work corners.

"One of Wren's pupils, wouldn't you say?" said Milo.

"My knowledge of church architecture is as slight as I guess yours is," said Petrella. "Anyone who put up a church in these parts three hundred years ago would be certain to copy Wren."

"Some of it isn't three hundred years old," said Milo. "That ashlar work's been renewed lately. Must have been an expensive job. Good endowments, do you think?"

"Or a generous congregation," said Petrella.

The west door swung easily on its hinges. There was nothing dim and religious about the interior. The word which came into Petrella's head was "shipshape". The windows, which had evidently suffered in the Blitz, were plain glass with a few colored lozenges let into them. Through them the afternoon sun glinted on the brasswork and was reflected from the well-polished woodwork of the pews. Some of the memorial tablets on the walls were old, but the armorial devices and the lettering had been freshly picked out in black and scarlet and gold.

"I hope that the brightness of the coloring does not offend you."

The Reverend Sabine had come in very quietly. His appearance matched his church. His white hair was neatly brushed, his face glowing with serenity.

"I had an expert here from Winchester recently. He persuaded me that the tablets and effigies in our churches were originally all brightly and cheerfully colored. By the time the colors wore off, people had forgotten what they once looked like. Or perhaps they associated bright colors with Roman Catholicism. At all events, they let them fade. An epitome of our lives, wouldn't you say? When we are young, everything is bright. As we grow older, things turn to gray."

Petrella said, "I like the colors very much, sir. I like the whole church. Is it very old?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It was built in 1670."

"By a pupil of Wren's," said Milo hopefully.

"Certainly not. By the master himself. Do you remember that poem—the one which suggested that Wren sited his churches so that ships coming upriver could see—how does the line go?—'A coronal cluster of steeples tall.' I'm certain that's why he chose this precise spot. Our spire may not be tall, but it must have been one of the first which the sailors saw."

"This has always been a seafaring parish?"

"Indeed yes. Many quite well-known sailors are laid to rest here. You are interested in local history?"

Petrella said, "I think I ought to introduce myself." He did so.

"Do I gather that you are here on business?"

Petrella explained what had brought them there. The Reverend Sabine said, "What you suggest is perfectly possible. I never lock the gate, or the church for that matter. It sounds risky, but in fact I have never lost anything." He was leading the way out as he spoke. "The boys could have run straight down the lawn here, past my boathouse—that, incidentally, I *do* lock up—and dived straight into the river. If they are local boys, I don't doubt they can swim like fishes. They spend half the summer in and out of the water."

The bank of the river had been built up here against the winter floods and was capped with a flat wall of stone.

"At half-past four this morning the tide would have been just on the ebb. There'd have been another two foot of water. It would have been a safe dive for a boy."

"I expect that's what happened," said Petrella. "It would fit in well with the point they were picked up at. Thank you very much. I'll come back some time and have a proper look at your church, sir."

"You'll be very welcome," said the Reverend Sabine.

As they were walking back up East Bank Street, Milo said, in a voice which he tried to keep carefully non-committal, "I suppose you noticed, sir—?"

"If you mean," said Petrella, "that the Reverend Sabine seemed to know the time the boys dived into the river, a point which I had *not* mentioned—"

"That's it, sir. Didn't you think it was odd?"

"I didn't think it odd at all. I imagine that everyone in this neck of the woods knows exactly what happened last night. Every

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

detail of it. You have to remember that Lower Dock is not simply a neighborhood or a parish. It's a family."

Barry and Rex were drinking in the private bar at the back of the East Indiaman. They were as pleased with themselves as any two young men who had done a good night's work for which, in due course, they would receive a fair reward. They had both had a number of drinks, but neither of them was drunk.

"Damn," said Rex. "Here comes Soapy. What does he want?"

A small thin man, with the look of a bookmaker's runner, was pushing through the crowd toward them.

"Pretend we're not here," said Barry. He swung his chair round and presented a broad back. Soapy was not upset. He annexed a third chair, dragged it to their table, and sat down.

"I want to talk to you, boys," he said.

"We're not boys," said Barry. "We're girls in drag."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Rex, "accosting two young ladies in a public house."

"I've been brought up respectable," said Barry, "and I intend to stay that way. Now you are here, could you lend me a touch of powder for my nose, dearie?"

Soapy said, "Very funny." He didn't sound amused. "That was a nice job someone pulled at Plowman's last night. I see in the papers he claims he lost twenty thousand quid's worth of stuff. Mind you, I expect he's laying it on a bit, for the insurance company."

"I expect he is," said Barry. "Why are we supposed to be interested?"

"I thought you might be, seeing I happened to be down East Bank Street early this morning and saw you two run past."

"That's right," said Rex. "We often take an early morning run. We're in training for the Olympics."

"And I suppose you always run carrying a couple of satchels each."

"It's part of the training schedule," said Barry, but his eyes were wary.

"The same as your early morning swim—like you told the fuzz when they picked you up."

"That's right," said Rex. "It's a special pentathlon event. The other three events are putting the weight, tossing the discus, and kicking people who butt in where they aren't wanted."

Soapy said, "There's no point in getting tough. I know what you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

done with that stuff. I want it. I'll give you a fair price for it. But I'm going to have it."

"Just suppose," said Rex, "for the sake of argument I mean, just suppose we had any idea what you were talking about, and just suppose we told you to get stuffed."

"I don't think you mean that."

"Why not?"

"Because if you took that attitude, I'd feel obliged to go and see the gent concerned myself. Of course, I'd have to say I got the tip from you. I don't think he'd be pleased."

The two boys looked at each other, then rose simultaneously to their feet. Soapy shifted his chair back. He didn't think they were going to attack him, but his right hand was on the taped hilt of a knife which lived in a leather sheath strapped to the outside of his right leg and which could be drawn quickly through his trouser pocket.

The boys seemed more amused than angry. Rex said, "Why don't you do that?" Barry said, "I'm sure you'll forgive us if we push off now. Athletes like us have to get to bed early."

Soapy sat staring after them. His suggestion ought to have scared them. He was worried that they should simply have been amused.

The Reverend Sabine answered the bell himself and stood gazing down inquiringly at his visitor.

"My name's Lidgett," said Soapy. "You don't know me."

"Are you the one the boys call Soapy?"

"Some of them do. It's a sort of nickname."

"I didn't imagine that it was your baptismal name," said the rector. "What can I do for you, Mr. Lidgett?"

"I wanted to have a word with you."

"I have ten minutes to spare before the monthly committee meeting of the Women's Institute."

"That should be enough," said Soapy.

He followed the rector into his study. The open spaces between the bookcases were crammed with photographs. One of them showed a much younger Sabine pulling an oar in a racing eight.

"Oxford, many years ago," said the rector. "Won't you sit down?"

Soapy perched himself on the edge of one of the upright chairs and cleared his throat. He found some difficulty in beginning. However sure you may be of your facts, it is difficult to accuse an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ordained clergyman of being the head and organizer of a ring which exports stolen goods.

The Reverend Sabine gave him no help. He listened impassively to what Soapy had to say. When he had finished, he said, "You seem to have been telling yourself some extraordinary story, Mr. Lidgett. What do you propose to do next?"

"I can tell you what I'm *not* going to do—unless I have to. I'm not running off to the police."

"I asked you what you *were* going to do," said the Reverend Sabine gently. "Not what you weren't."

"I've got a proposition. You cut me in for twenty percent and I'll keep my mouth shut."

"I call that very generous," said the Reverend Sabine. As he spoke he was unlocking the drawer of his desk. Soapy wondered what he was looking for. It turned out to be an indexed notebook.

As he turned over the pages he said, "I've been a very long time in and around South London parishes. My first living was at the Elephant. Then I had a spell farther east at Catford. Then I ended up here. All rough areas. I enjoyed every one of them. And I made a lot of good friends." His fingers seemed to have settled on the letter P. "Peddie. That was the one I was looking for."

"You know Jim Peddie?" said Soapy. There was a very slight catch in his voice.

"Jim's the younger brother. The one I was thinking of was Peter Peddie. The one they called Peter the Painter."

The Reverend Sabine had found the number he wanted and reached for the telephone. "Look," said Soapy. "I think maybe you didn't quite understand what I was getting at."

"I understood you perfectly," said the Reverend Sabine. "You wanted to cut yourself in for a fifth share of some illegal profits you imagine I am making, and were threatening to report me to the police unless I cooperated. Am I right?"

"I didn't make no threats," said Soapy. His voice was agitated.

"It sounded very like one. Oh—is that you, Lisa? Father Sabine here. Is Peter with you? I see. And I could reach him there this evening? How is everything with you? I was sorry to hear about Ronnie. Yes, I saw it in the papers. Come over and have a cup of tea and we'll talk about it."

He listened for a few moments to what the woman at the other end was saying, then replaced the receiver. Soapy was staring at him with a look of fascinated disbelief.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Was that Mother Peddie you were talking to?"

"That's right. I shall be having a word with Peter this evening."

Soapy passed a tongue over lips which seemed suddenly to have gone dry. "What are you going to tell him?"

"I shall tell him," said the Reverend Sabine, without any trace of humor in his voice, "that you have been annoying me. That sounds like Mrs. Partridge and the committee of the Women's Institute. I'm afraid you'll have to go now, Mr. Lidgett."

"I've had an idea," said Detective Sergeant Roughead. "Suppose Captain Crabtree was a real person."

"The idea had occurred to me," said Petrella. "And we got the checkers at Central on to it. It was complicated by the fact that 'Captain' could be a military or a naval title. To say nothing of the fact that lots of people call themselves 'Captain' without any real right to do so. They made a pretty fair job of it. There wasn't anyone round here who fitted in remotely with the sort of person we're looking for."

"Suppose he's dead."

"If he's dead, he can't be running a smuggling racket."

When he left his house in the Cut that morning, Soapy Lidgett had an uncomfortable experience. He spotted a business acquaintance on the other side of the street and hailed him. He was certain the man heard him, but instead of coming across to talk, he slipped down a side street and disappeared. Another man whom Soapy knew brushed straight past, apparently not seeing him.

It came to a head in the East Indiaman, when he went in for his midday drink. There was a party of four men, with half-filled glasses, seated at a table at the far end of the room. Soapy walked across to join them. One of the men saw him coming and said something. All four gulped down their drinks, rose to their feet, and departed without a word.

Soapy was so upset that he left without ordering a drink. He had an uncomfortable feeling that if he had done so, the landlord might have refused to serve him.

He knew now what had happened.

The word had gone out against him.

Milo said, "I think I've found him, sir"

"Found who?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Captain Crabtree."

"All right. Let's have it."

"I've copied it out. It was in Palgrave's *South Bank Worthies.* Charles Hannaford Crabtree. Came of humble parentage. His father was reported to have been a pork butcher who amassed a considerable fortune at the time of the Great Plague. I thought that sounded rather gruesome, sir."

"Cut the commentary, Sergeant. Just let us have the facts."

"Yes, sir. Charles was educated at the school in the Charterhouse and joined the navy as a gentleman volunteer in 1680. He attained the rank of Post Captain in 1703 and left the navy on the death of his father. Being the only surviving son, he inherited the family business, which he expanded greatly into the importing and exporting side. He became a generous benefactor of all local charities and died in 1742, greatly respected by all who knew him."

"Importing and exporting," said Petrella thoughtfully. "It might be worth following up. I'd like to know more about him."

"I'm afraid that's all there is."

"Palgrave was only a collator. He usually gives references. See where he got his stuff from. Then have a look at the original works."

"Suppose they aren't in the library."

"The Library of the British Museum," said Petrella patiently, "has a copy of every published book. Don't they teach you anything at Eton?"

When Soapy left the East Indiaman he walked slowly in the direction of his house. He needed time to think. It was a few minutes before he got the impression that he was being followed. There were plenty of people about in the High Street. It was impossible to be sure.

He went down a side turning, covered twenty yards almost at a run, then stopped. Nobody seemed to be following him. Fifty yards farther on, the road turned to the right. Then it turned to the right again and he found himself back in the High Street.

As he emerged, a young man bumped into him. Soapy leaped back. The young man looked surprised and said, "Sorry, I'm sure," and crossed the road to the opposite pavement. Here he was joined by a second young man, who said something which made them both laugh.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Soapy kept an eye on them as he moved off. They made no attempt to cross the road, but seemed to be keeping level with him on the opposite pavement. They were not in sight when he reached his front door. He let himself in, bolted the door behind him, and stood for a moment, sweating.

He could hear his housekeeper, Mrs. Catterick, grumbling to herself in the kitchen. She seemed upset.

"Turning the place upside down," she said.

"Who did?"

"Those two men. I ought to report them. They got no right."

"*What* men?"

"Inspectors they called themselves. From the Gas Board. Had half the floor up."

Soapy held onto the door jamb to support himself. He said, "Just what did they do?"

"I dunno what they did. That's up to them, isn't it? They know their job, I suppose. Tracing a leak, they said."

"And you let them do it?"

"What did you expect me to do?" said Mrs. Catterick with a show of spirit. "Throw them out? Where are you off to now? Your dinner's in the oven."

"I'm going out," said Soapy.

Petrella had been hoping to get away early to take his wife out shopping. Three times he thought he'd made it, three times the telephone had thwarted him. This time it was Station Sergeant Cove.

"It's *who?*" said Petrella irritably.

"Lidgett, sir. Soapy Lidgett."

"What does he want?"

"What he says he wants," said Sergeant Cove impassively, "is police protection."

"He must be joking."

"You wouldn't say so. Not if you'd seen him. *And* he wants the Gas Board to inspect his house, to see if someone's left a bomb under the floorboards."

"I suppose I'd better find out what it's all about."

"Please yourself," said Sergeant Cove. "Speaking personally, I wouldn't worry if someone did Soapy up in a sack and dropped him in the river."

Soapy started talking as soon as he came into the room.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sergeant Cove had been right. The man was scared stiff. Out of a jumble of words Petrella gathered that he had been followed and threatened and that his house had been visited.

"Who by?"

"It's them Peddies."

At this Petrella did sit up. Peter and Jim Peddie and their families were a byword in South London for genial brutality. They operated from Catford and were not Petrella's personal headache, but he knew their reputation.

"Why would the Peddies be bothering you?"

"I don't know. Honest to God, I don't, Inspector. I never done nothing to them."

"They wouldn't be bothering you unless you'd bothered them somehow."

Soapy shook his head. "Someone's been telling lies. That's all I can think."

"What have they actually done?"

It didn't seem to amount to much. People wouldn't talk to him. Gas Board looking for a leak.

"I don't see that we can do anything on that sort of evidence. If they start something, we'll crack down on them quick enough."

The telephone on his desk buzzed at him. He picked up the receiver, listened for a moment, then covered it with one hand.

"You'll have to run along. Have a word with Sergeant Cove. He'll get the man on the beat to keep an eye on your house." As soon as the door had shut behind him, he said, "Go on, Sergeant."

"I thought you ought to have this right away, sir. I've been in the reading room of the British Museum. *Captain Crabtree was buried in St. Barnabas Church.* He'd contributed pretty handsomely in his lifetime and they gave him a private tomb. The book says, 'Students of mid-eighteenth century memorial sculpture will be interested in this tomb which stands against the south wall of the Lady Chapel. It shows the deceased recumbent, with his head on a pillow adorned with his personal armorial devices and his feet on a representation of a ship of war.' Hullo?"

But Petrella had gone.

He parked his car twenty yards short of the gate as the clock of St. Barnabas Church struck six.

At that hour the streets were empty and quiet. The latch clacked loudly as he raised it. There was no one in the churchyard, or in the church. It occurred to Petrella, as he walked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down the aisle, that if his suspicions were well-founded, it would have been sensible to have brought a couple of men with him. Too late now.

Captain Crabtree's tomb filled a lot of the floor space in the tiny Lady Chapel. Supine on his bed of stone, the face of the sailor-merchant looked up at him. Some forgotten craftsman had chiseled those life-like features—the masterful nose, the pursed lips, the triple chins folding into a heavy neck.

There'll be some catch that holds the lid shut, thought Petrella. But it was only the weight of the lid and the recumbent figure which kept it down. Using all his strength, he raised it six inches.

It was enough for him to see that the interior was completely empty.

As he lowered it, the Reverend Sabine said from behind him, "You must be stronger than you look, Inspector. I know very few men who could lift that lid single-handed. If you want to look inside I could give you a hand, and we'd get it up all right."

"Thank you," said Petrella. He was still getting his breath back. "I could see that it was empty."

"Quite empty, alas."

"What happened to the Captain?"

"His coffin was stolen many years ago. The thieves would have been after the lead lining. No doubt the bones were dropped into the river. It's very handy for the disposal of unwanted objects. An undignified ending for one of our great benefactors. But I don't imagine the Captain minded."

"I don't suppose he did," said Petrella. "What I was wondering about was whether this very convenient receptacle had been used for quite different purposes since."

"I can see that you have some theory about it. I suggest we move into the vestry and discuss it there. We shall be more comfortable."

The vestry, being on the north side of the church and possessing only a single narrow window, was already in half darkness. The rector switched on an overhead light and closed the heavy door behind him. He said, "Please sit down and tell me what is in your mind."

"I was interested," said Petrella, "in a comment which was reported to me some months ago. It was about a collection of stolen coins. One of the young men who was thought to have stolen them said that the coins were quite safe, 'because Captain Crab-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tree was looking after them.' We were puzzled as we knew no one of that name in the district."

"But now you have solved the puzzle."

"I think so, yes."

"You have concluded that the thieves were using his empty tomb as a cache."

"A temporary cache, before they continued on their way out of the country. It is the second stage of their journey which would need careful organization."

The Reverend Sabine smiled. It was a broad relaxed smile, with no artifice about it. He said, "Break it to me gently. You concluded that I was the organizer."

"It seemed a possible explanation."

"Might I guess that Mr. Lidgett—Mr. Soapy Lidgett—has been talking to you?"

"He saw me this afternoon. And made certain allegations. I thought the least I could do was to put them to you."

"Suppose for a moment, Inspector, that Mr. Lidgett's fantasies were the sober truth. Would it shock you?"

The question was so unexpected that Petrella found himself fumbling for an answer. "Shock me?" he said at last. "No. It wouldn't shock me. Crime doesn't shock me. It's my business. You wouldn't expect a doctor to be shocked by disease."

"Let me remind you," said the rector, "that the Roman Catholic Church, which is, in many ways more logical than our own, decided some years ago that if religion was to be brought back as a genuine force into the lives of the people, priests must work much more closely with their flocks. They formed a guild of worker priests. Young men who spent their days in the factories and plants, in the mines and quarries, working alongside their own people."

"I think I read something about it," said Petrella. "But I haven't heard of it lately. Wasn't it a success?"

"On the contrary. It was too successful. The young priests became entirely imbued with the ideas of their parishioners. Ideas which were sometimes Marxist, sometimes criminal. They undoubtedly exercised a great influence, but the Vatican could not accept the risks involved."

"You mean the flock might corrupt the shepherd."

"They were young men. Young men are susceptible. It is only in rare instances that a priest can descend from his pulpit, live with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and for his people for six days in the week, then reascend his pulpit on Sunday to give them the spiritual guidance they need."

"I should have thought it was impossible."

"Curiously enough one of my ancestors seems to have achieved exactly that feat. He had a parish at Cooling in the marshes. It was a small poor parish and the greater part of his people lived entirely by smuggling."

"And he helped them?"

"He did not help them. He led them. When the goods were landed, they were brought straight to the church. There was a convenient hiding place underneath the pulpit. But—and that is the point—it was from the same pulpit every Sunday that he preached the higher duties of Christian charity and faith."

Petrella said, "And he could do that although he was encouraging crime. As any man who acted in the way we have been discussing would also be encouraging crime. How could he square that with his conscience?"

"He could do so without difficulty. He would reflect that the people concerned would steal anyway and that all he was doing was enabling them to obtain a fair reward for their labors."

Petrella was only half listening. A minute before he had thought he heard a footstep. Now he was certain. There was more than one man outside. He cast an eye round the vestry. The window was too narrow to permit exit. It opened almost directly onto the river. As the rector had said, very handy for the disposal of unwanted objects.

"You must look, too, on the positive side of the picture," said the rector. "When I first came here, the total congregation was three old ladies. Now we have a regular attendance of over a hundred, many of them young people, an active parish council, an enthusiastic choir. *If* this has been achieved by the methods you and Mr. Lidgett are suggesting, would you not feel inclined to agree that the end justifies the means?"

"No," said Petrella firmly. "I would not." He was certain now that a number of men had come into the church. He could hear the murmur of voices and even a quiet laugh. "Nor can I let this matter rest where it is."

"If I might advise you, in your own best interests, I think—I really do think—you should regard the whole matter as closed."

Petrella stood up. He said, "Am I to understand that as a threat?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Reverend Sabine peered up at him in mild surprise. "A threat?" he said. "Why in the world should I threaten you? My meaning was, simply, that if you were to publish your theories to anyone else you would be in grave danger of being laughed at. Guardians of the law must never be laughed at. It is the one thing they cannot stand. And let me give you a further reason. Even if your theory was correct, it would be out of date."

"You mean," said Petrella slowly, "that if Captain Crabtree's tomb was used in the manner we have discussed, it will not be so used again?"

"I mean that the matter would be out of my hands. I learned this afternoon that I have been appointed to the office of Archdeacon of Southwark. My work from now on will be largely administrative. My successor here has already been nominated. He is, I believe, a thoroughly worthy young man and an enthusiast for the Boy Scout movement."

"I see," said Petrella.

"And in any event," said the Reverend Sabine, with something approaching an unclerical grin, "can you imagine that the word of Soapy Lidgett—and I can assure you he would be your only witness—would have stood up against that of an Archdeacon-elect of Southwark?"

Petrella thought about Soapy as he had last seen him. Even if he hadn't vanished altogether, he would certainly refuse to open his mouth. It was an impossible situation. He would have to keep a close eye on the Reverend Sabine's successor though.

He said, "I take your point, Rector."

The rector said, "I shall have to be getting along. Perhaps you would care to stay on for a little and listen."

"Listen?"

"To our choir practice." He led the way out into the church. The choir stalls were full of men and boys.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, gentlemen. Shall we start with the first of our evening hymns?" He nodded to the organist, who played a soft chord.

"*The day thou gavest, Lord, has ended,*" said the Reverend Sabine.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by
BARBARA CALLAHAN

Lorna Tyson was 50, a frustrated spinster, and a meticulous bookkeeper whose ledgers were "a work of art . . . neat and orderly, just as life should be." She was also "the office's maiden aunt, everybody's friend and confidante." But such a "guardian angel" should not play Miss God—it can be dangerous . . .

THE PINWHEEL DREAM

by *BARBARA CALLAHAN*

Sometimes I wish I could trade my recurring dream with someone. My dream is like a kaleidoscope, very colorful, almost pretty. I would be glad to accept a black and white dream in return for my living-color one. I would even accept a horror dream, a terrible one in which the sleeper is chased up and down cliffs by a mad dog. Any dream would be better than mine. My dream focuses on a pinwheel, a child's toy, a stick on which bits of plastic are pinned to be set into motion by the wind.

My pinwheel is red, white, and blue. In my dream I spin it with my finger. As soon as my finger touches it, the colors change into black and white polka dots. Then the polka dots dissolve into a solid purple. Then the purple turns to red. After redness floods the dream I wake up.

It's such an innocent-looking dream but after I've dreamed it a few nights, I make those awful phone calls. I don't pick names randomly from the phone book. I call the relatives or friends of people who work in the same office I do.

When Ellen, the stenographer, stopped after work at the bar on the first floor of our building with John, the engineer, I was compelled to call her husband. I had overheard Ellen telling her husband on the phone that she had to work late. I knew she was lying. After John and Ellen left the office, I took the next elevator downstairs and saw them through the open door of the bar. They were sitting close together in a booth.

© *1977 by Barbara Callahan.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I hurried to a pay phone in the drug store, pulled out my address book, and called Ellen's husband.

"I think you should know," I told him, "that your wife is having a drink in Richard's Bar with a man she works with. They're there right now."

I hung up before he could say anything.

Ellen's eyes looked terribly red the following morning. She told everyone that her allergies were acting up. I knew differently. I knew she must have spent the entire evening in tears because after my call to her husband I went back to the lobby of our building and sat in a chair with a newspaper opened out to conceal my face. I lowered it to see Ellen pulled roughly out of the bar by her husband.

She looked so pathetic that I felt a little guilty. I brought coffee to her desk. She thanked me before pouring out the story of her humiliating exit from the bar.

"I have to tell someone, Lorna," she sobbed, "and you're so good, such a good person, I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all, Ellen," I replied.

"I don't know how he found out. He must have been suspicious about all the overtime that didn't appear on my paycheck."

"You won't do it again, dear? Promise Lorna."

"I promise," she said like a repentant child.

I went back to my desk and opened my ledgers. I'm a bookkeeper and my books are a work of art. They are neat and orderly, just as life should be but isn't, unless a person steps in at the right moment to see that life balances out properly. I smiled down at the figures in the books. Ellen's life was balanced. She had erred and been punished for it.

A simple phone call from Lorna, good old Lorna, the office's maiden aunt, everybody's friend and confidante, had straightened her out. And good old Lorna could continue her behind-the-scenes accounting like an invisible but efficient guardian angel. Ellen's husband had not mentioned the phone call to her. Telling her would have destroyed the image of omniscience he needed to keep Ellen in line in the future.

After the incident with Ellen, I looked forward to my pinwheel dream. I seemed to derive courage from it, the courage to do the necessary calling. So much time and energy in our office seemed to be devoted to perpetrating deceptions that I felt our business motto should be "Deception is our most important product."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After dreaming the pinwheel dream for five nights, I called Harry's wife to tell her that Harry had gone to the race track one afternoon. Harry belongs to Gamblers' Anonymous and he shouldn't go to the track. I had heard Harry telling his wife on the phone that he had to meet a client in the afternoon, but I saw the racing forms on his desk when I brought him a doughnut and coffee. Deception, deception!

Harry was red-faced when he asked Payroll to mail his check home each week instead of giving it to him. Like Ellen's husband, his wife must not have told him about the anonymous call.

The pinwheel dream receded from the proscenium of my sleep for nearly a month after my call to Harry's wife. I was grateful. The forces set into motion by the dream caused me elation, I do admit that, but they also caused me some anxiety. If I were discovered, I would no longer be "good old Lorna" to my associates. Stripped of that title, I would have lost access to the deceptions that proliferated in our office like fruit flies.

The new employee, Paul Mason, forced me to summon the dream from the wings where it always lurked. At first Paul puzzled me; then he angered me. He not only refused to confide in me but he refused to make self-incriminating phone calls in my hearing. Yet I knew his poker face and formal mannerisms masked a deception more evil than anyone's. Paul became my greatest challenge. I brought coffee and discussed the weather more times with him than I had ever done with a new employee. My efforts at conversations yielded only polite responses.

After dreaming the dream, I knew what I had to do. Under the pretext of working late I stole through the empty offices to Personnel. In the filing cabinet I found his personnel folder. It revealed a deception more vile than I had expected. True, he had not deceived Personnel but he had deceived me and the others in the office who had a right to know about him. After all, sharing deceptions was part of our office mystique. Even I had contributed a deception to the office gossip—a false deception if that's not a redundancy. I had invented an affair I supposedly had years ago with a married man. I shared this imaginary escapade with everyone so I'd appear more human.

My excitement at the discovery in Paul's folder left me breathless. I slipped the folder back into the cabinet and sank into the Personnel Director's chair. If I might resort to a bit of humor, Paul Mason's case was to be my greatest balancing act.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But excitement, such a fickle sensation, ebbed almost immediately. Whom could I call? His wife? Hardly. She had to know the contents of his folder. My co-workers? Impossible. If I passed Paul's data along, Sue Nelson, the Personnel Director, would know someone had peeked into the files, and she might remember I had worked late. I could not afford to lose my job. At 50 it's not easy to get another one.

Then whom to call? I picked up a small flag that stood on Sue's desk. I twirled it around and around like the pinwheel in my dream. Invoking the power of the dream, I sat back and waited. In minutes I knew whom to call.

But first I had to take a short ride. I drove to Paul's street. Pretending the car had stalled, I glanced at the house next to his. In the middle of the grille-work on the storm door I read the name *Barrett*. My excitement returned. I drove home, sailing through yellow lights which I don't ordinarily do. My hands shook as I picked up the telephone directory. Yes, yes, it was there—Paul's neighbor's listing: J. B. Barrett, 45 Dover Drive, 867-4259.

A child answered the phone. "Get your mother," I ordered. After his mother said hello, I said, "Your next-door neighbor, Paul Mason, is a child molester who spent five years in Rutherford Prison."

I hung up in the middle of a gasp at the other end.

A week after the phone call I met Paul's wife. She came into the office to pick up his belongings, the photographs and other things from his desk that were of no value to anyone else. With the usual solicitude of good old Lorna, I helped her put them into a cardboard box. Collecting his office mementos proved to be too much for her. She slumped into his chair and cried, "Why did he have to slash his wrists? Things were going so well for us until the neighbors refused to let their children play with ours. They told their kids Paul was a bad man. And that he was cured."

I gave her two aspirins and helped her to the elevator. I winced when she smiled through quivering lips to tell me what a good person I was. That night I stayed late at the office, but not to prowl through filing cabinets. I stayed to do some prowling through my mind.

The exultation I usually experienced for weeks after a phone call had disappeared. I realized I had gone too far. Rather than balancing Paul's accounts, I had placed his liabilities on the first page of the ledger where they had overwhelmed him. That wasn't good bookkeeping. And the anxiety that I might someday be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

caught had almost overwhelmed me. I had to stop making those calls.

From the office I called Dr. Kevin Adams, the first psychologist listed in the phonebook. I hoped he could help me to stop. But on my first visit I detested him and sustained the emotion throughout all my visits. He sat behind a desk, puffing on a pipe, a thirtyish sandy-haired man with a studied poker face that reminded me of Paul Mason.

"Just tell me who you are," he said on the first visit. "That's always good for starters."

"I'm Lorna Tyson," I answered.

He puffed on his pipe for fifteen minutes, saying nothing. The clock on his desk ticked away my time and my money.

Finally he said, "Just who is Lorna Tyson?"

Unable to decide if he wanted a philosophical discourse on the concept of "person," or if he simply wanted some background information on me, I sat silently for almost fifteen minutes. I finally settled on: "She's a bookkeeper."

"A bookkeeper." He scribbled some words on a pad before telling me my time was up. I had spent $30.00 for the privilege of telling him my name and occupation.

During the next three sessions I told him about good old Lorna, everybody's friend and confidante. He nodded once or twice before saying "umph" and telling me my time was up. Seething, I left his office. I was so upset I forgot my gloves. When I went back to get them, I saw Dr. Adams locked in a passionate embrace with his receptionist. I quickly closed the door. The next morning I called the Psychological Association and reported his unprofessional behavior. For the first time since Paul committed suicide, I felt relaxed.

Dr. Adams shattered that good feeling on my next visit.

"Tell me, Lorna," he said, "about your compulsion to report people's transgressions."

"I don't know what you mean," I stammered.

"Oh, come now, Lorna, let's not play any more games. We've had four sessions together and not once have you indicated what's bothering you. I saw your gloves on the table in the waiting room and knew you'd come back. I deliberately kissed my receptionist to see what your reaction would be. You called the Psychological Association to report me. That didn't upset me or the Association. The receptionist is my wife. As a new patient, you wouldn't have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

known that."

Along with some other epithets that I didn't know spiced my vocabulary, I called him Dr. God.

"You're quite unprincipled, Dr. God," I shouted. "You manipulate behind the scenes like some superior being so you can make lesser creatures squirm."

"Then we're very much alike, aren't we, Lorna?" he said.

I was too stunned to answer. I dropped into the leather armchair across from his desk and watched as he emptied the ashes from his pipe into a large ashtray. He was waiting for me to speak. All my defenses had toppled, so I told him about the phone calls to Ellen's husband and to Harry's wife. He said nothing, but he knocked his pipe against his desk as if it were a judge's gavel. On the following visit I told him about my call to Paul's neighbor. The pipe hit the desk with metronomic frequency.

"Stop that, Dr. God," I said.

"Stop what?" he asked.

"Stop passing judgment on me with your pipe."

"Sorry, I didn't realize what I was doing. You're quite astute."

"Quite," I answered.

When I returned to my office, I doodled the number seven all over a memo pad. The next visit with Dr. God would be my last. I had seen him six times and poured all my deceptions into his gossip-pot. He had a great racket going. He sat on his chair, a dead-pan Father Confessor, consuming all the meat from the patient's pitiful emotional stew as well as chomping on all the money in the patient's pitiful wallet, and he offered nothing in return. My bookkeeper's mind rebelled against the imbalance of it.

On the seventh visit, before I could say a word, he opened with, "Tell me about your dreams."

I almost slipped off my chair. I had said nothing to him about my dream. Dr. God could read minds!

"How did you know about my dream?" I choked.

"Ah," he said, "now we're getting somewhere. I didn't say, 'Tell me about your dream! I said, 'Tell me about your dreams.' You heard the singular of the word, therefore I must conclude you have a recurring dream."

Trapped, I told him the dream.

"I dream I have a red, white, and blue pinwheel. Since there is no wind to move it, I must turn it with my finger. After I touch the pinwheel it disintegrates into spinning black and white polka

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dots. The polka dots stop moving and are replaced by purple. Then the purple dissolves into red and the red fills up the dream."

Dr. God put his pipe down because he had no verdict to tap out on the dream. He looked baffled. I rejoiced. He stood up and began to pace behind his desk. For five beautiful minutes I reveled in his bewilderment.

"I admit the dream puzzles me, but I do see one clue. Since the pinwheel is a child's toy, I assume the dream relates to an incident in your childhood."

"Bravo, Dr. God. You've hit on the old psychological standby—childhood. I was wondering when you'd get to that."

He ignored my jibe and sat down. He led me into a game. Free association, he called it. I had to sit like an obedient child and tell him all the words that came to my mind when I thought of a pinwheel.

"Flag," I told him because of the pinwheel's red, white, and blue colors. Windmill, bicycle wheel, I told him—spinning wheel, roulette wheel, wagon wheel.

He eyed me like a teacher about to fail a student. "Think harder," he urged, "harder! What else is round like a pinwheel and needs an outside force to move it?"

I glanced around the room. Nothing came to my mind until I looked at the phone on his desk. "A telephone dial," I said softly.

"Eureka!" he shouted. "As a child, the pinwheel reminded you of a telephone dial, something else that you had to turn with your finger. And the black and white polka dots spinning in your dream are the letters and numbers on a black instrument. When you were a child, telephones were only black with white letters and numbers. We are decoding the dream, Lorna," he said.

I ignored his use of the word "we." *I* was decoding the dream. I began to cry. He came to me and patted me on the shoulder, a gesture that made me cry harder. It reminded me of the day the policeman patted eight-year-old Lorna on the shoulder as she sat on the front steps watching the three stretchers being lifted into ambulances.

"One of the stretchers," I heard myself telling him, "held my mother, the other, her lover, and the other, my father. My father came home from work and found my mother upstairs with another man. My father shot both of them, and then himself."

He handed me his handkerchief. "And all that happened on a day when you were playing happily with a pinwheel. Then you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heard shots, ran into the house, and dialed the police. They probably told you to wait outside, but you went upstairs—were you wearing a purple dress?—and saw all the redness from the blood of the three bodies.

"Now we understand the meanings of the pinwheel, the polka dots, the purple, and the red. And now we understand why you made those calls to damn your co-workers. You wanted to punish them. You transferred your rage at being deceived by your mother to your co-workers who, in your mind, were deceiving others."

"Yes, Dr. God," I admitted. I said yes to his interpretation so I could leave. I had to think. I had to plan.

"May I use your phone, Doctor, my car is in the shop. I must call a cab."

"Of course."

He watched me dial the phone. I put through my request for a cab in a shaky voice. Then I hung up.

"Do you always do that?" he asked.

"Do what?"

"Hang up the phone by tapping the listening end of the receiver on the table before putting the receiver back in its cradle."

"I guess so. Why?"

"Because tapping the phone on the table reminds me of a judge tapping his gavel at a trial."

"Then we have something in common, Doctor," I said casually. "You tap your pipe when you deliver a verdict. I tap the phone."

His face became dead-pan again. "Now that you understand your dream you've probably delivered your last verdict via the telephone."

"But you have more verdicts to tap out, don't you, Dr. God?"

"If you say so," he responded.

He was wrong about my delivering my last verdict on the phone. I had another one to deliver. He was correct about some of my dream, but not all of it. In his egotism he missed the more complex points. I had to see to it that he never discovered the truth when he had a chance to think it over.

The truth was mine alone. The dream did unravel its meaning to me in Dr. God's office. On that summer day when I was eight years old, I walked two blocks to wait for the bus that was to take me on a day trip with my Brownie troop. My mother waved to me from the door. She seemed happy that I would be gone all day.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the bus didn't come. It had broken down. Our Scout Leader knew we were disappointed so she gave us each a pinwheel to take home. The pinwheel didn't move because there was no wind. I took it in the house so that the fan in the living room would make it spin. I heard them, my mother and him, laughing upstairs. I turned the pinwheel round and round with my finger.

The spinning pinwheel made me think of the telephone dial. I called my father at work and told him about my mother and the man upstairs. As I waited for him to come home, I colored a picture of a queen in my fairy-tale coloring book. I used purple for her dress. My father had told me that purple was a royal color, the color of kings and queens. I felt like a queen sitting there. I felt powerful. I felt royal. I felt purple. And purple was exciting. I always felt purple when I made the calls about my co-workers.

Dr. God was right about the red in the dream. It was blood, the blood all over my mother and that man. I didn't look at my father. Red is a good color too. It's the color of satisfaction, of a verdict delivered, of sentencing received. Harry—his gambler's face was red from embarrassment when he asked to have his paycheck mailed home. Ellen's eyes were red after a night's crying. Paul's wrists were red after he slashed them.

And Dr. God's pipe will glow red when he puffs and puffs on it as he desperately tries to extricate himself from the situation I am planning for him. I feel no pity for him. He too was feeling purple in that office when he thought he had interpreted my dream. I can't have that—purple belongs to me. And so does red.

I looked at my mussed hair and my scratched face and my ripped dress in the mirror of my apartment. I had had time to do those things to myself in the ladies room before the cab came. The cab driver noticed and asked if I was all right. I acted too distraught to answer him. I smiled at my cleverness. My car isn't in the shop. I just needed a witness to my disheveled state. And luckily Dr. God's wife hadn't come to work today.

I dialed my beige phone, regretting that it wasn't an old black one. When a voice said, "Jones, Twenty-second Precinct," I began to sob. I was quite good at it. "Dr. Adams of the Baker Building tried to attack me in his office this afternoon. Please come, please!"

It was the best acting job of my life. It's hard to feign tears when one is feeling so purple. The police promised to come at once. Before I hung up the phone, I carefully tapped the listening part of the receiver on the table.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a NEW detective short-short by

ISAAC ASIMOV

In the footsteps of earlier boy-detectives—Lord Frederic Hamilton's P. J. Davenant, Harvey J. O'Higgins' Barney Cook, Eden Phillpotts' Vincent Peters, Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer, Booth Tarkington's Penrod, Ellery Queen, Jr., Danny Nathan—and now young Larry, a son of a detective . . .

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

by ISAAC ASIMOV

This was one year when we were glad Christmas Day was over.

It had been a grim Christmas Eve, and I was just as glad I don't stay awake listening for sleigh bells any more. After all, I'm about ready to get out of junior high. —But then, I kind of stayed awake listening for bombs.

We stayed up till midnight of Christmas *Day,* though, up till the last minute of it, Mom and I. Then Dad called and said, "Okay, it's over. Nothing's happened. I'll be home as soon as I can."

Mom and I danced around for a while as though Santa Claus had just come, and then, after about an hour, Dad came home and I went to bed and slept fine.

You see, it's special in our house. Dad's a detective on the force and these days, with terrorists and bombings, it can get pretty hairy. So when, on December 20th, warnings reached headquarters that there would be a Christmas Day bombing at the Soviet offices in the United Nations, it had to be taken seriously.

The entire force was put on the alert and the F.B.I. came in too. The Soviets had their own security, I guess, but none of it satisfied Dad.

© *1977 by Isaac Asimov.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The day before Christmas he said, "If someone is crazy enough to want to plant a bomb and if he's not too worried about getting caught afterwards, he's likely to be able to do it no matter what precautions we take."

Mom said, "I suppose there's no way of knowing who it is."

Dad shook his head. "Letters from newspapers pasted on paper. No fingerprints; only smudges. Common stuff we can't trace and he said it would be the only warning, so we won't get anything else to work on. What can we do?"

Mom said, "Well, it must be someone who doesn't like the Russians, I guess."

Dad said, "That doesn't narrow it much. Of course, the Soviets say it's a Zionist threat, and we've got to keep an eye on the Jewish Defense League."

I said, "Gee, Dad, that doesn't make much sense. The Jewish people wouldn't pick Christmas Day to do it, would they? It doesn't mean anything to them, and it doesn't mean anything to the Soviet Union, either. They're officially atheist."

Dad said, "You can't reason that out to the Russians. Now why don't you turn in, because tomorrow may be a bad day all round, Christmas or not."

Then he left, and he was out all Christmas Day, and it was pretty rotten. We didn't even open any presents, just sat listening to the radio which was tuned to an all-day news station.

Then at midnight, when Dad called and said nothing had happened, we breathed again, but I still forgot to open my presents.

That didn't come till the morning of the 26th. We made *that* day Christmas. Dad had a day off and Mom baked the turkey a day late. It wasn't till after dinner that we talked about it again.

Mom said, "I suppose the person, whoever it was, couldn't find any way of planting the bomb once the Department drew the security strings tight."

Dad smiled, as though he appreciated Mom's loyalty. He said, "I don't think you can make security that tight, but what's the difference? There was no bomb. Maybe it was a bluff. After all, it did disrupt the city a bit and it gave the Soviet people at the United Nations some sleepless nights, I bet. That might have been almost as good for the bomber as letting the bomb go off."

I said, "If he couldn't do it on Christmas Day, maybe he'll do it another time. Maybe he just said Christmas to get everyone keyed up and then, after they relax, he'll—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dad gave me one of his little pushes on the side of my head. "You're a cheerful one, Larry. No, I don't think so. Real bombers value the sense of power. When they say something is going to happen at a certain time, it's got to be that time or it's no fun for them."

I was still suspicious, but the days passed and there was no bombing and the Department gradually got back to normal. The F.B.I. left and even the Soviet people seemed to forget about it, according to Dad.

On January 2 the Christmas-New Year's vacation was over and I went back to school, and we started rehearsing our Christmas pageant. We didn't call it that, of course, because we're not supposed to have religious celebrations at school, what with the separation of church and state. We just made an elaborate show out of the song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas," which doesn't have any religion to it—just presents.

There were twelve of us kids, each one singing a particular line every time it came up and then coming in all together on the "partridge in a pear tree." I was number five, singing "Five gold rings" because I was still a boy soprano and I could hit that high note pretty nicely, if I do say so myself.

Some kids didn't know why Christmas had twelve days, but I explained that on the twelfth day after Christmas, which was January 6, the Three Wise Men arrived with gifts for the Christ child. Naturally, it was on January 6 that we put on the show in the auditorium, with as many parents there as wanted to come.

Dad got a few hours off and was sitting in the audience with Mom. I could see him getting set to hear his son's clear high note for the last time because next year my voice changes or I know the reason why.

Did you ever get an idea in the middle of a stage show and have to continue, no matter what?

We were only on the second day with its "two turtle-doves" when I thought, "Oh, my, it's the *thirteenth* day of Christmas." The whole world was shaking around me and I couldn't do a thing but stay on the stage and sing about five gold rings.

I didn't think they'd ever get to those "twelve drummers drumming." It was like having itching powder on instead of underwear—I couldn't stand still. Then, when the last note was out, while they were still applauding, I broke away, went jumping down the steps from the platform and up the aisle, calling, "Dad!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He looked startled, but I grabbed him, and I think I was babbling so fast that he could hardly understand.

I said, "Dad, Christmas isn't the same day everywhere. It could be one of the Soviet's own people. They're officially atheist, but maybe one of them is religious and he wants to place the bomb for that reason. Only he would be a member of the *Russian* Orthodox Church. They don't go by our calendar."

"What?" said Dad, looking as though he didn't understand a word I was saying.

"It's *so,* Dad. I read about it. The Russian Orthodox Church is still on the Julian Calendar, which the west gave up for the Gregorian Calendar centuries ago. The Julian Calendar is thirteen days behind ours. The Russian Orthodox Christmas is on *their* December 25, which is *our* January 7. It's *tomorrow.*"

He didn't believe me, just like that. He looked it up in the almanac, then he called up someone in the Department who was Russian Orthodox.

He was able to get the Department moving again. They talked to the Soviets, and once the Soviets stopped talking about Zionists and looked at themselves, they got the man. I don't know what they did with him, but there was no bombing on the thirteenth day of Christmas, either.

The Department wanted to give me a new bicycle for Christmas, but I turned it down. I told them I was just doing my duty.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 2600, Greenwich, Connecticut 06830.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send us your current mailing label with new address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* con-man story by

ROBERT EDWARD ECKELS

Major Henry T. McDonlevy, the genial, gentle con man, is up to his old (and new) tricks—but this time banker Drexler, the intended mark, has an F.B.I. special agent to help him foil the villain in the scam . . .

THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW

by ROBERT EDWARD ECKELS

The girl at the receptionist's desk looked over at me for perhaps the tenth time. "I'm sure someone else could help you," she said, "if—" She let her voice trail off. What she wanted, of course, was for me to tell her why I was there, but she was too well trained to come right out and ask. And, of course, I wasn't going to volunteer anything either. I shook my head.

"I'll wait," I said, and went back to watching the Major and Drexler through the glassed-in top to Drexler's office. The interview seemed to be going well. At least the Major was smiling, and Drexler for his part didn't look unhappy. Finally they both rose, shook hands across the desk, and the Major came out alone. He was a short, barrel-chested man with a square ruddy face, full gray mustache, and close cropped hair, and as he strode past he gave me a brief, uncurious glance. I waited until he was well clear, then turned back to the receptionist.

"All right," I said, "now I'll talk to your Mr. Drexler."

She gave me a quick nervous smile, then scurried back to Drexler's office. I couldn't blame her; I would have scurried too if someone identifying himself as a special agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation had just spent half the morning waiting for my boss.

Drexler spent a long time comparing my face with the photo on

© *1977 by Robert Edward Eckels.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my I.D. He was a small slightly built man in his mid-60's with a pinch-featured face and thinning hair of no particular color. His suit was a wrinkled blue that would have been equally out of style any time after the 1930's.

Appearances aren't always deceiving, of course. But this time they were. If you went by his tax returns, he was worth well over $500,000, not to mention the assets of the bank he controlled. And if you could believe the rumors, he had at least twice that much squirreled away in lockboxes and negotiable securities that the Internal Revenue Service had never heard about.

Now, finally satisfied, he passed back my card. "This is something of an honor," he said. "Or is it? We don't usually see much of the F.B.I. around these parts."

I smiled. "I don't imagine you usually see much of people like Henry T. McDonlevy either," I said.

Drexler looked up cautiously. "What about Major McDonlevy?" he said.

"Nothing," I said, "except that he just happens to be one of the slickest con artists operating today. I know he doesn't look it, but three years ago he and a younger man named Tom James made over $20,000 in a phony land giveaway in Michigan. Shortly after that they took a Cincinnati banker for another $15,000 in a switch on the old faro-bank scam. Then they dropped out of sight. God knows where Tom James is, but six months ago the Major popped up again in Evansville with a fake stock offering. I've been on his trail ever since."

"I'm surprised you haven't arrested him."

"I wish I could," I said. "But knowing and proving are two different things. It's a rare man who'd be willing to get up and testify that he's been foolish and greedy and maybe a little bit dishonest as well. Not in open court anyway. That's why I changed my tactics and decided *not* to wait until after the victim had been stung."

"I see," Drexler said. He pursed his lips and stared thoughtfully at the wall. "Well, anyway," he said at last, "I thank you for the warning. You can rest assured I'll be extremely cautious in any future dealings with the Major."

I shook my head. "That's exactly what I *don't* want," I said. "I want you to go along with him."

Drexler raised his eyebrows and looked me full in the face. "To trap him, I suppose," he said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Exactly," I said, "and because it would be a trap you could testify to afterwards with no stigma."

Drexler nodded slightly. "So I could," he said, "if I chose to involve myself. On the other hand, the occasion might never arise. Ordinarily I don't discuss bank business with third parties. In this case, however, I don't mind telling you that Major McDonlevy is primarily interested in obtaining some land west of the city and is looking to the bank for help in financing the purchase. Whether or not we make the loan is largely dependent on the value of the security—in this case, the land itself. I know the area, and values are appreciating. So, frankly, I don't see how the bank could lose even if he were to default. —"Of course," he added drily, "what the Major does with the property once he's acquired it is no concern of mine or the bank's."

"You mean you won't cooperate?" I said.

"I didn't say that," Drexler said. He made an irritable gesture with his hand. "I'm to meet McDonlevy for lunch tomorrow, then go out to inspect the property. If it develops that he does plan to bilk me in some way, well, then it will be my pleasure to see him behind bars. On the other hand"—he shrugged—"anyone else, it's their problem. Understood?"

"Perfectly," I said.

For a traveling man there was only one place in town for lunch and that was the Elk's Club. It was open to the public and crowded at noon, but a bill slipped to the waiter gave me a table within earshot of Drexler and the Major.

"Actually," the Major was saying as I settled in, "I could get by with only three of the lots. However, I try to guide my life by the Good Book, and so naturally I need the surrounding lots as well."

Drexler looked at him curiously. "I'm not sure I see the connection," he said.

"Love thy neighbor," the Major said. He smiled ingenuously. "I find it easier if I can insure he isn't competitive."

"Yes," Drexler said, "very wise." He looked down at his plate. "I don't think you've ever said, though, just what you have in mind."

"Haven't I? It's no secret, of course. Actually—" He stopped as a slight disturbance broke out nearby. A large harried-looking man had come in and was expostulating with a waiter. Moments later, followed by the now frowning waiter, the large man headed straight for the Major's table.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It was this one," he said. "I know it." The waiter tried to shush him but he was already addressing Drexler and the Major. "You gentlemen didn't happen to find a wallet, did you? I had it here. I know I did because I paid with a credit card. But when I got back to the hotel—"

The Major leaned back in his chair and regarded the stranger evenly. "Perhaps we did find something," he said. "If it's yours I'm sure you won't mind describing it."

The stranger's face brightened. "Of course," he said. "It's a wallet. I said that, though, didn't I?" He tapped his jacket over his heart. "Breast-pocket type. Brown leather."

"Any initials?"

"L.G.A.," the stranger said. "For Lester G. Arnold. Inside there was $51 plus credit cards."

The Major glanced over at Drexler and nodded. "I think that's sufficient," he said. He took a flat wallet from his jacket and handed it over to Arnold. "It was on the chair when we came in," he explained. "We were going to turn it over to the cashier when we left. But now, of course, you've saved us the trouble."

"Saved you the trouble?" Arnold said. He laughed a short barking laugh and sat down uninvited. The waiter gave him one last frowning look, but at the Major's nod the waiter drifted away.

"I was the one who was saved," Arnold said. "And I don't mean just the money either. I owe you a lot and I'm going to make it up to you."

"That's hardly necessary," the Major said.

"I think it is," Arnold said. "No, I mean it. I won't insult you by offering you money, but—well—is either of you a betting man?"

Drexler shook his head. "No," he said flatly.

"Well, I am," Arnold said. "I came to town for the races, and I won't let you stop me. Part of whatever I bet this afternoon goes down for you. How about it?"

Drexler looked over at the Major who shrugged. "I suppose," the Major said, "if it would make you feel better—"

"It would," Arnold said earnestly. "Believe me, it would."

From where I sat it was impossible to judge Drexler's reaction. But the Major's was obvious. He sat back and smiled indulgently. Then, while they were exchanging introductions, I signaled the waiter I was ready to order.

Later that evening Drexler called me at my hotel, after he and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Major had returned from their inspection trip.

"I'm afraid it's beginning to look as if you may be right," he said.

"I thought you would feel that way," I said, "after that little act that was put on in the restaurant this afternoon."

"Yes," Drexler said. "That was an interesting coincidence. Even more interesting, Arnold called me not half an hour ago. It seems he won $100 for me today."

"You didn't expect him to lose, did you?"

"No," Drexler said, "I suppose not. However, Arnold has now offered me the option of taking the $100 or going with him to the track tomorrow to try to build it higher. Ordinarily I'd take the money, but under the circumstances it might be more interesting to go to the track and see what develops. I thought you might like to come along."

I smiled happily. "You better believe it," I said.

The ages were right; so Drexler introduced me as his nephew when Arnold came to pick him up the next afternoon.

"I hope you don't mind my asking the boy along," Drexler said.

"No, of course not," Arnold said. He turned to me. "Is this your first time too?"

"I'm afraid so," I said.

"Nothing to be ashamed of," Arnold said. "Everybody has to start sometime. And if I may say so myself, you and your uncle couldn't have picked a better teacher."

"I'm sure of it," I murmured.

Arnold let it pass, but the Major frowned. "I've seen you before, haven't I?" he said.

I nodded. "Probably at the bank," I said. "I was waiting for my uncle one day when you had business there."

"Of course!" The frown disappeared and we all went down to Arnold's car.

"There is one thing I ought to clear up," Arnold said as we got in. "We aren't going to the track itself."

"But you said—" Drexler began.

"I know what I said. I said we were going to the *races*. And we are. The smart way." And he put the car in gear and started off.

It was a short ride, down through town and out to the fringes of the business district. Wholesalers predominated here and most of the buildings were closed for the weekend; but Arnold led the way

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to an unmarked side door, then up a short flight of steps and down a corridor to a second door, also unmarked. Inside was nothing less than an old-fashioned horse parlor complete with a wall blackboard and a cluster of desks festooned with telephones which rang incessantly.

"By George," the Major said, "I didn't think there were places like this any more."

"Just a few," Arnold said smugly. He got us installed in chairs facing the one concession to changing times—a large TV set high up on one wall. Then he went to place his bets. When he came back, he looked even more like the proverbial cat. "All set," he said.

"What happens now?" Drexler said.

"We wait," Arnold said. He looked at his watch. "It shouldn't be long. If you'd like something to eat—or drink—there's a bar."

Drexler shook his head. "No," he said and folded his arms and settled back to watch the still blank TV. A number of others drifted in to take places behind us and occasionally one of the desk men would come over to replace one set of numbers on the blackboard with another. Then finally the TV set switched on.

The horses were already lined up in the gate, the camera looking almost straight down at them.

"Closed circuit," Arnold whispered. "You can't get anything like this kind of view anywhere at the track."

A bell rang and the horses were off and running.

"Keep your eye on number three," Arnold said. "That's ours."

At the moment the horse was well back in the pack, but just before the far turn it began to move and after that there was no contest. It pulled ahead and stayed there, finishing a good three lengths ahead of its nearest competitor.

"By George!" the Major said. "We won."

"Of course," Arnold said calmly. He got out his copy of *Racing Form*. "Now in the next one," he said, "the one to watch is number six. King's Only."

Some of those behind us had got up and gone over to the desks to lay fresh bets. When Arnold didn't move, Drexler looked at him curiously. "Aren't you betting?" he said.

"Already taken care of," Arnold said. "We'll just keep on parlaying our winnings."

"But suppose we lose?"

"We won't," Arnold said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And they didn't. King's Only won in a romp. So did Raintree in the third and every other horse Arnold had picked. At the end of the seventh, though—a cliffhanger which saw a 5-to-1 outsider come galloping out of the pack at the last minute to streak across the finish line a nose ahead of the favorite—he folded his *Racing Form* and leaned back in his chair with an air of heavy finality.

"That's it for me," he said. "You two can take a fling on your own if you like, but I'm through for the day."

The Major hesitated. By now his stake—and Drexler's—had grown to $2500 each. Finally he shrugged. "No point in being greedy," he said. "How about it, Drexler? Shall we call it quits too?"

Drexler nodded slowly. "I see no reason to go on," he said. His eyes were small and thoughtful.

The trouble came as they were cashing in. One of the desk men took Drexler's and the Major's receipts and carefully counted out $2200 for each of them.

"You're $300 short," Drexler said sharply.

The desk man shrugged. "Service charge," he said.

The Major began to sputter. "I never heard of such a thing!" he said.

"House rule," the desk man said. He picked up Arnold's receipts, looked at them for a long moment, then rose wordlessly and went through a doorway behind him. He was gone a few minutes and when he came back he was accompanied by a stocky balding man in shirt sleeves.

"That's the one, Mr. Gunderson," the desk man said, pointing to Arnold.

The stocky man looked at Arnold balefully. He held the stub of a cigar in one hand and Arnold's receipts in the other. "You won a lot of money from me these last couple of days, friend," he said.

Arnold shrugged. "Nothing wrong with that, is there?" he said, trying hard to sound indifferent and not quite succeeding.

Gunderson shook his head. "Not at all," he said, "if it's on the up and up. The problem is you did it all on credit and when I checked with the guy who recommended you, he said he couldn't vouch for you beyond a couple of hundred bucks." He cocked his head to one side and looked at Arnold suspiciously. "You went way in over you head, friend. What would have happened if you lost?"

"I would have paid up," Arnold said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Would you?" Gunderson said. "Well, suppose I give you a chance to prove it. I don't mind paying off a couple of small bills on spec, but when somebody nicks me for $75,000 I like to know he's as serious about his end as I am about mine." He turned to the desk man. "What was his last bet?"

"$15,000."

"$15,000," Gunderson repeated, savoring it. He turned back to Arnold. "All right," he said, "this is what you're going to do if you want me to pay off. Cover the bet. Show me you've got $15,000. In cash."

Arnold swallowed hard. "You'll have to give me a couple of days—" he began.

"I'll give you nothing," Gunderson said. "I'll stop by your hotel after we close tonight. If you've got the money, fine. If not"—he stuffed the receipts into Arnold's breast pocket—"you can use these to paper your wall."

"You can't do this!" Arnold protested.

"Sue me," Gunderson said and turned on his heel to go back through the doorway through which he had come. The desk man just looked at Arnold dispassionately.

The Major was literally trembling with anger, but he held himself in until we were back in the hallway. "This is outrageous," he sputtered. "The man's no better than a thief."

Arnold shrugged despondently. "Sure," he said. "But I haven't got any muscle and he knows it."

"Good lord, man, you can't just give up. Call his bluff. Show him the $15,000. It would ruin him if he welshed then."

"I wish I could," Arnold said. "The trouble is I don't have the $15,000."

"Then you *were* betting money you didn't have."

"Of course," Arnold said. "In my place you would have done the same. Because for the first time in my life I had the real straight stuff. Those races were fixed. I couldn't lose—it was a sure thing." He managed a wry smile. "Or so it seemed."

The Major looked down at his hands, obviously embarrassed. "I'd help you if I could," he said, "and you're welcome to the $2200, of course. But, unfortunately, the bulk of my money is still tied up in the east."

"I'd make it worth your while," Arnold said. "You wouldn't have to lend me the money. Just show it to Gunderson and I'll cut you in for a full third. $25,000."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Major continued to study his hands. Drexler glanced over at me. I gave him the faintest of perceptible nods. "I think we can work something out," Drexler said drily.

"I don't suppose by any chance it could be true," Drexler said. It was later and we were alone in Arnold's car on our way to pick up the money, Arnold and the Major having dropped off at their request to wait at Arnold's hotel in case Gunderson showed up early.

"You 'don't suppose' right," I said. "In the first place, horse parlors like that went out with World War Two. And even back then nobody but nobody was allowed to bet large amounts on spec until his credit had been checked out thoroughly."

"And yet he was able to pick the winners."

"Sure," I said. "In the old days there would have been a man on the other side of the wall with a microphone tied into a radio. Now all you have to do is set up a TV to play back a tape of an earlier race. You'll notice they were careful *not* to let us hear the start when the date and place would have been announced."

"That simple," Drexler murmured.

"It usually is," I said. "People like Arnold and the Major count on greed doing most of the work for them. Their next step most likely is to inveigle you into joining Arnold for a bet that will really take Gunderson for a bundle—which, of course, will lose."

"I see," Drexler said. "And if I don't play along?"

"Then we'll have done all this for nothing."

"Not quite," Drexler said. "I'll still have $2200 of their money."

"Look again," I said. "I think you'll find it's slush, funny money—counterfeit."

Drexler smiled bleakly. "They don't leave anything to chance, do they?"

"They try not to," I said. "But you've got a couple of things going for you that put you way ahead of them. One: you know what they're up to."

"And two?"

"Me," I said.

"Yes," Drexler admitted. He didn't say anything more until we reached his house. It was a large rambling structure half overgrown with ivy and surrounded by a high stone wall. All I saw of the inside was the ground-floor sitting room Drexler parked me in while he went off into the rear of the house. When we returned he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was carrying a slim brown-leather attaché case.

"I imagine you'll want to count this," he said, "unless, of course, you're prepared to give me a receipt on my word alone."

"A receipt?"

"Of course," Drexler said. He smiled faintly. "This is your plan. I'm merely going along as a good citizen. And like a good citizen I expect the government to reimburse me if anything goes wrong."

He held out the case. I took it reluctantly. "You don't leave much to chance yourself either, do you?" I said.

"Not a thing," Drexler said and watched as I counted. There was $10,600 inside, just enough to bring the $4400 he and the Major had won to $15,000. I put the money back in the case and, using the case as a desk, wrote out Drexler's receipt. He accepted it gravely.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll just put this away in my safe and then we can be on our way."

"Whatever you say," I agreed. "I'll wait for you in the car." And I went outside, taking the attaché case with me. A few minutes later Drexler joined me, and we drove back downtown.

The Major was alone in Arnold's room when we got to the hotel.

"Where's Arnold?" I said.

"Downstairs. Didn't you see him?"

"No."

The Major frowned. "Gunderson was here," he said, "and when Arnold couldn't produce the cash he called off all bets. Arnold went down with him, hoping they'd run into you on the way. You must have just missed each other."

"What happens now?" Drexler said.

"I don't know," the Major said. "Perhaps—"

He never finished. The door opened and Arnold came in. He looked bitter—and angry. "Damn!" he said. "There you are."

"Gunderson wouldn't wait?" the Major said.

"Not a single damn minute," Arnold said. "But he hasn't seen anything yet! If he thinks he was stung today—" He broke off and looked around at the three of us. "How about it?" he said. "Are you still with me? Shall we *really* take him?"

Drexler regarded him calmly. "That would depend on what you have in mind," he said.

Arnold nodded. "There's a horse running tomorrow," he said. "Pleasant Fancy. If you look at *Racing Form* you'll see he's lost

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his last five starts. Not a good record at all, but what the *Form* doesn't show is that he was deliberately overmatched. It's an old trick that owners use to run the odds up. Then they race the horse well below his class, where he's sure to win, and bet as heavy as they can. Tomorrow the odds on Pleasant Fancy will go at least as high as 15-to-1, and the owner's set for a killing. We'll have to spread the bets out—maybe even hire a few stooges to place some for us to keep Gunderson from getting wise—but with $15,000 we can take him for over $200,000 easy." He looked directly at Drexler. "What do you say?"

Drexler's eyelids drooped slightly; then he nodded. "All right," he said.

Later, after the details of where and when we'd meet the next day had been worked out, Drexler and I rode down together in the elevator. If I hadn't still been holding the attaché case, I would have been rubbing my hands together gleefully.

"You don't mind going home alone, do you?" I said.

"Why? Where are you going?"

"To see the local police," I said, "and set up a raid on that 'bookie joint' now that I know it wasn't dismantled the minute we left. Plus arrange to have our good friends upstairs picked up." I handed him the attaché case. "We won't be needing this any more," I said. "The TV setup plus your testimony should carry it from here. Especially after we pick up a tape showing Pleasant Fancy losing."

Drexler nodded, then, true to form, opened the case to check the money inside. By then, though, we'd reached the lobby and he had time for only a quick look before the elevator door slid open. The sight of money inside was enough to reassure him, so he closed the case with a decisive snap.

"You can count it when you get home," I suggested.

The sarcasm was lost on him. "Yes," he said.

"And while you're at it," I added, "don't forget to tear up that receipt I gave you."

This time he did smile. "Yes," he said again. "Of course."

I saw him safely in a taxi, then went down to where the car was parked, tipped the boy I'd asked to watch it, and drove back to the hotel. The Major and Arnold were waiting by the rear entrance. I pulled over to let them in the car.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where's the money?" Arnold said.

"In the trunk compartment," I said. "Where it's safe."

"I take it then," the Major said, leaning back comfortably, "you had no trouble making the switch."

"None at all," I said. "Drexler wouldn't put up the money without a receipt, then made the mistake of leaving me alone while he put the receipt in his safe."

"Very good," the Major said. "Very good indeed, but now I suggest we follow the Good Book once more and shake the dust of this town. I don't think it will remain so hospitable once our friend Mr. Drexler finds out that he's carried home only a small fraction of the money on top of stacks of cut paper—and realizes that his favorite F.B.I. man is none other than the Tom James he was so carefully warned against."

"Q"

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE TO—

ORDER TODAY!

THE BEST IN SF!

Complete and mail this coupon and we'll mail **four** quarterly issues to your doorstep.

☐ **Enclosed is $4.00 which includes shipping and postage.**
(In Canada and all other countries, $5.00)

Name _____
(Please Print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

TO: ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE,
Box 1855 GPO, New York NY 10001 **EQMM 777**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Schlock Homes story by

ROBERT L. FISH

When you have read this latest exploit of Schlock Homes, you will literally gasp with astonishment at his "magnificent demonstration of analytical genius." The Magus of Manhunters, the Confucius of Codes and Ciphers, outdoes himself—and that, dear reader, takes some doing!

THE ADVENTURE OF THE ELITE TYPE

by ROBERT L. FISH

In reviewing the many cases in which I was privileged to observe the analytical ability of my friend, Mr. Schlock Homes, in the year '74, I find several of ordinate interest. There was the matter, for example, of the young man accused of hanging awnings in a building where no canvassing was allowed, a case in which Homes easily proved the restriction was aimed at the sailsmen in the sail-loft on the second floor. There was also the mysterious affair of the chimney-sweep found dead on the pavement beneath his working place, a case Homes resolved in record time, and which I find in my notes as *The Adventure of the Purloined Ladder*. But no problem, I believe, better tested my friend's genius than the one I find annoted in my casebook as *The Adventure of the Elite Type*.

It was a pleasant Sunday morning in early June, and Homes and I were taking our ease in our quarters at 221-B Bagel Street. Homes was toying with his violin, practicing esoteric semibreve rests, while I was rereading all the works of a favourite author on a favourite subject of mine. I had completed *The Man Who Was Thirsty* and was just started on *The Keg of Notting Hill*, when our peace was disturbed by the urgent sound of pounding feet upon our staircase.

Both Homes and I looked at each other in surprise, as if silently

© *1977 by Robert L. Fish.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

questioning the other as to the identity of the unexpected visitor; but before either could voice his query, the door had burst open and a young man of dishevelled appearance had staggered into the room. In one hand he held a bit of paper which he continued to wave, almost in our faces, as he spoke with great agitation.

"Mr. Homes!" he cried, facing my companion. "You are the only one who can help me!"

Homes calmly set his instrument to one side and motioned our excited guest to the basket chair before the empty fireplace. It was only after the young man had finally seated himself and had rather brusquely refused a candied curry that Homes spoke.

"Now that you are in better control of yourself," he said in a kindly tone, "possibly you will favour us with your problem. You may speak quite freely in front of Dr. Watney as he seldom pays the slightest attention."

"I apologise for my melodramatic entrance," the young man said, although he did not appear particularly contrite, "but in my daily endeavour I face constant abuse, and when something of this nature comes along to further the degree of my harassment, I find it difficult not to allow one's nerves to get the better of himself. Or, rather, misself. I mean, one's self, of course! Or is it myself? You see? Normally I would never be in the slightest doubt as to syntax or definition, but I must admit to being wrought. Or is it overwrought? It certainly isn't underwrought, is it?" Words seemed to fail him.

"Perhaps if you would begin at the beginning?" Homes suggested.

"The beginning? Oh, of course, the beginning!" The young man took a conscious grip upon himself. He leaned forward intently in the chair, fixing Homes with his eye. "Mr. Homes, my name is John Simple and I am the theatrical reviewer for *Old York Magazine*. In the course of my day's work I am frequently the target of jealous, malevolent missives from people whose insensitivities do not permit them to accept the fact that my reviews are not only accurate but brilliant, but that this brilliance and accuracy come to them couched in a purity of elitist language they frankly do not deserve. Normally, I am able to reply to these peurile critics with verbiage so devastating that they seldom attempt to face my virulent barbs a second time. But what can one do with something like this?"

In anguish he smote the paper he had been holding with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fingers of his other hand, as if for emphasis, while he turned a tortured visage to Homes.

"Mr. Homes," he cried, "what can one do when one is insulted in *cipher?* It should not be permitted! How can one answer an insult couched in language one cannot fathom?"

Homes shrugged and considered the young man with the faintest of smiles upon his face.

"If one cannot fathom a message," he suggested with his always-present indisputable logic, "can that message not contain a compliment rather than an insult?"

"Never!" said our visitor fiercely. "It has never occurred and I doubt it ever will. Nor," he added, thinking about it, "should I be particularly pleased if it did. No!" He stared at the bit of paper as if hypnotised by it. "It is an insult, Mr. Homes, but so devilishly clever as to be beyond my capacity to solve!"

Homes stretched out his hand. "If I may?"

"Certainly!" The young man handed over the paper he had been clutching so feverishly, and I came about Homes's chair to study the missive over his shoulder. It was, as the young man had so accurately stated, at least partially in cipher, but so complex that for once my great faith in Homes's ability to resolve a problem was shaken. It read, quite simply:

John Simple: I can only comment on your reviews in comic-page language: !¢!!@!$(@!!#!@!%!#@@)!%!$(@)% Signed J.L.

"Most interesting," Homes muttered, his eyes lighting up at the sight of the unintelligible gibberish. He brought his eyes from the intriguing bit of paper almost reluctantly. "If you leave your address with Dr. Watney, Mr. Simple, I shall get right to it, and hope to have a solution to your problem shortly."

"I pray you do," young Simple said, and came to his feet. "I am in the midst of composing a scathing reply to this J.L., whoever he is, and I should not like to waste my brilliant scurrility should the message be other than the usual. You see?" he said despondently. "I used the word 'brilliant' again! I should have said 'sagacious' or at the very least 'superlative'!"

"Quite," I said, holding my hand out for his card.

He disregarded my outstretched palm. "As for my whereabouts, I shall be in the wings of the Paladium Theatre, where a marvel-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ous company is to perform one of the greatest works of the theatre in their superlative fashion this evening. You see? I said 'superlative' again!" And on this note our visitor wandered disconsolately from the room.

Homes paid his departure no attention, preferring instead to study the paper in his hand a moment, and then wriggled in his chair, a sure sign either of his delight in a new problem, or a recurrence of a broken spring I had thought long repaired. I sighed.

"Tell me, Homes," I said despairingly," do you see the slightest possibility of solving a cipher so completely exotic?"

"The solution will undoubtedly be merely a matter of labour," Homes replied, pinching his lip as he continued to peruse the mysterious message. "The identity of the writer is less a problem. There can be little doubt that this J.L. is a vain young lady, rather near-sighted, quite careless, a scholar of the classics, but with a touch of genius to her make-up, as well. You agree, Watney?"

"Homes!" I exclaimed reprovingly. "It is not like you to make light of a matter that was of such import to your departing client! Why do you pull my leg at a time like this?"

"No, no, Watney," said he with more than a touch of his usual impatience. "I am quite serious." He picked up his Dr. Grabow and the shag and a moment later was sending clouds of acrid smoke ceilingwards as he tented his fingers and fell into a brown study, the note left in his lap for easy reference. Then, swinging about suddenly, he reached to a convenient shelf for a reference volume.

"Homes," I said reproachfully, "you are not going to tackle the problem at once, are you? We were supposed to go to the zoo this afternoon, to watch the annual parade of the elk and the deer."

"I know, Watney," Homes said, and sighed. "You go alone. Much as I love to be around when the game is afoot, I'm afraid to-day it must be duty before pleasure!"

It was late afternoon when I returned. The room was filled with smoke and through the haze I was barely able to make out the form of Homes, bent over his desk, scribbling furiously. At his feet the numerous wads of crumpled paper testified to the intensity of his efforts during my absence.

Knowing his dislike of being disturbed when hard at work, I silently repaired to the sideboard and performed an experiment I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had read about, the addition of gin to vermouth, an experiment first performed I believe by one of the early popes, Martin I. I scarcely had time to stir the concoction when there was a sudden exclamation from Homes.

"Of course, of course!" he exclaimed under his breath, and taking a fresh sheet of paper he quickly fell back to his calculations. I had been with Homes long enough to properly interpret his reactions. Pausing only long enough to test the new mixture, which was quite palatable, I hastened to his side.

"Homes," I said proudly, "you have solved it!"

But Homes brushed aside my interruption, continuing to transfer figures to the paper.

"Shall I take the answer to Mr. John Simple at the Paladium?" I asked, ready as always to serve.

But Homes did not hear me. He had completed his translation and was staring with ill-concealed horror at the very words he had just finished setting down. For a moment he appeared in a state of shock, but then he swiftly recovered.

"The Paladium, indeed!" he said heavily, and came to his feet. "There is not a moment to lose! Have our page take a message to Inspector LeStride at the Yard to take steps to see the Paladium is surrounded at once, and to wait for us there with sufficient men to make a complete search of the premises."

"But, Homes," I said in bewilderment. "I do not understand any of this. I am sure the doorman would be only too happy to locate John Simple for us, without the need for Scotland Yard. Or even a quiet announcement from the stage—?"

But Homes was already urging me towards the door, and even as I sent our page off with the mysterious summons, Homes had hurried down the stairs and had joined me at the kerb, hastily pulling on his gaiters. A moment later he had waved down a passing hansom, sprung inside, and was dragging me in after him.

"The Paladium Theatre, driver!" he cried, "and tuppence-ha'penny extra if you get us there quickly!" He fell back into his seat as our cabbie cracked the whip and the hansom started up with a jerk. I turned to stare at my friend in astonishment.

"Really, Homes," I said reprovingly. "I realise our young visitor gave the performance at the Paladium an excellent recommendation, but the curtain does not go up for fifteen minutes. I see no necessity for this great urgency."

"No?" said he scathingly, a grim look on his face. "Tell me,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Watney, would you consider the fact that an infernal machine has been placed at the Paladium Theatre reason enough for urgency?"

"Homes!" I exclaimed. "Are you certain?"

"Quite," said he, and reached into his pocket for the mysterious bit of paper. "We have ample time before we arrive at the theatre, so allow me to explain."

His thin finger traced the message as our coach swayed dangerously down Bagel Street before turning into Piccalilli, our horses' hooves clattering on the rough cobblestones, the whip cracking above us.

"You will note, Watney," Homes said, "the characters in which this message is printed. I have made a study of type faces, as you know, and I can assure you that this font comes from one of the new machines used to mechanically transfer individual characters to paper. These machines are called 'typewriters' and are not as rare as one might suppose. However, since the persons using these machines are almost invariably female, it was a fairly good guess that our mysterious J.L. is a woman."

I listened with widened eyes, as Homes continued.

"You may recall my mentioning the writer's expertise in the classics." His finger pointed. "Here, you see, she refers to a comic page. Who is the most famous comic page in all literature? Undoubtedly Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote,* who called himself 'Number Two' while he referred to his master as 'Number One'—or at least he did in the Swahili translation, a further proof, if need be, of the writer's classical background. Comic-page language, therefore, could only be language in *numbers.* But, if the message was meant to be in numbers, why do no numbers appear? *Because the writer inadvertently struck what is called a 'shift-key' on the machine, which causes, in place of numbers, these meaningless hieroglyphics to appear!*"

I stared at my companion in speechless amazement at the brilliance of his analysis, although in truth I had no idea what he was talking about. Homes smiled at me in his usual superior manner, and went on.

"We can therefore add to our growing picture of the writer the fact that she is careless and inattentive to details. Had she taken the trouble to check her message before sending it on, she would have seen at once her error. Even the simple chore of removing the sheet from the machine should have revealed it. Except, of course, to a person quite near-sighted."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But you also said she is vain, Homes!" I exclaimed.

"Had she worn spectacles, she would have avoided the mistake."

"But—the touch of genius, Homes?"

His thin fingers tapped the message.

"Note, Watney, that despite the error of inadvertently striking this so-called 'shift-key,' the message is without a single mistake. Consider: here is a person who cannot clearly see the keys of the machine, yet she makes no mistakes. *She has memorized the position of each key and is therefore able to type-write without consulting the keyboard!* It must be a talent not one in a hundred thousand could master, and surely indicates a superior intelligence!"

As I marvelled at my friend's great perception, Homes waved away my congratulations and continued.

"However, the writer was not my concern. It was the message itself. By studying a diagram of the keyboard of one of these new machines in my reference file, I was easily able to determine which numerals the writer would have put down had she not carelessly struck this 'shift-key' first. They were as follows:

161121492113121513220151492051"

I stared at my companion. "This was of help, Homes?"

He smiled grimly. "It was, indeed, Watney! By using the oldest transfer method known, where the numeral 1 equals the letter A, the numeral 2 the letter B, and so forth, I was able to come up with this." And he thrust a second sheet of paper into my hand. It read:

AFAABADIBAACABAEACBBOAEADIBOE.

I frowned. "A bit cryptic, Homes, is it not?" A sudden thought struck me. "Or possibly in a foreign language?"

"At first I thought so, but I could find nothing in my file resembling it. It then occurred to me that the highest number, taken individually, was a 9, and it struck me as dubious that anyone would send a message to a person as literate as John Simple using only nine letters. It meant, therefore, that some of the 1's had to represent the first digit of a two-digit number—or a letter between J and S—while some of the 2's served the same purpose for the balance of the alphabet. After that, as I had sus-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pected, it was merely a question of labour until I had the proper combinations."

"If you say so, Homes," I said dubiously, and wondered if my friend had been getting enough rest of late.

"I do say so," he replied shortly, and pointed to the paper again. "I now had this:

16 1 12 1 4 9 21 13 1 2 15 13 2 20 15 14 9 20 5!"

"And that was better, Homes?" I asked, worried whether Homes had been eating too many curried kippers of late.

"Quite," he said coldly. "Using the same transfer method, but with all twenty-six letters of the alphabet available, I now had the message." And he tapped the sheet significantly. I leaned over to read the last letters on the sheet. They read:

PALADIUM A BOMB TONITE

There was little I could say before this magnificent demonstration of analytical genius, but before I could even attempt to congratulate Homes on his remarkable achievement, our cab came rattling to a halt before the famous theatre, where we could see Inspector LeStride and a bevy of bobbies awaiting us. Homes hurried down, leaving me to pay our cabbie, as well as the exhorbitant tip he had promised, and when at last I joined the others on the pavement, it was to hear the Inspector speaking.

"The theatre is crowded at the moment, Mr. Homes," he said respectfully, "and the performance is about to begin. To attempt to ferret out an infernal machine with that audience in the hall will only lead to panic."

Homes paused in thought.

"It would not be in the auditorium," he said at last. "It is difficult to imagine a miscreant who would destroy a beautiful edifice just to wreak revenge on one critic. Besides, were it planted in the auditorium, someone reaching beneath his seat to deposit his chewing gum might well discover the device. Add to this the fact that Mr. John Simple prefers to watch the performance from the wings, and the solution is obvious. The bomb will be on the stage. A search there before the curtain goes up is therefore indicated. Proceed!"

"It shall be done, Mr. Homes," the Inspector said, and instantly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gave directions to his men. But when Homes moved forward, the Inspector put up his hand. "No, Mr. Homes, you must not risk joining in the search. You are too valuable to your country for me to permit you to face such danger needlessly. Go, for the sake of your nation and the world, and let us handle it!"

"If you insist," Homes said, and turned to me. "It will allow us to take some small advantage of the beautiful weather, Watney," he said, beginning to wave for a hansom. "We can go to Overton Stadium where they have sports under gaslight. To-night they are featuring Nottingham versus Newcastle in the soccer matches."

"I should like that, Homes," I cried enthusiastically. "You know how much I love to be on hand when the game is afoot!"

The following morning I had preceded Homes into the breakfast room and was attempting to peel a curry and open the morning journal at the same time when Homes joined me. I already had time to have studied the headlines, and since there was no mention of an explosion in the theatrical district the evening before, it was evident that Inspector LeStride had done his job well and had been successful in discovering and disarming the infernal machine. But when I went to offer my congratulations to Homes on a job well done, he waved my felicitations aside.

"There is nothing as dead as yesterday's problem, Watney," said he, drawing a napkin into his lap and reaching for the kippered capers, "especially when it is solved. What can you find that might be of interest to an idle investigator to-day?"

"I'm afraid there is nothing," I said sheepishly, studying the front page once again, and then paused as I turned to an inside page and folded the journal back to read it better. My spirits lifted. "There is this, possibly, Homes, although why it should be in the entertainment section I cannot imagine! It is an article signed by one Judith Lord, which begins as follows:

" 'If ever a crime was committed, it was committed last night when the curtain went up at the Paladium Theatre'."

"The Paladium Theatre!" Homes cried, flinging down his napkin. "It is too much for mere coincidence! A telegram to the management offering my services, if you will, Watney!"

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 469th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . "If Big Brother Says So" is not the kind of story EQMM usually publishes; but it is a subtle, shuddery story that deserves to be in print.

The author, Alice Rudoski, is in her forties. She works as a Supervisor in the Regina branch of Canada Manpower Centre, a government employment agency. Her spare-time interests and hobbies are "many and varied"—she is "an insatiable reader of short stories, with a preference for mystery, suspense, and humor"; also high on her list are gardening and home decorating. A "morning person," she is usually in her garden by five a.m.—her "favorite time of the day." She plays the organ and sews most of her own clothes.

As of this writing, she has had four poems published, an article in a Canadian church magazine, and two dramas on Canadian broadcasting.

We look forward to Alice Rudoski's next effort . . .

IF BIG BROTHER SAYS SO

by ALICE RUDOSKI

Margaret wondered if social workers *ever* shut up. Mrs. Gibbons hadn't stopped talking since they got in the car that morning to go to the new place. Now it was almost night time and they were still driving and she was still talking. It was boring always having to listen so you could say "yes" and "no" at the right time.

"You'll like Hattie McNabb, Margaret," Mrs. Gibbons was saying now, in her brisk, no-nonsense voice. "She has a small farm and there's only Hattie there, but you won't be lonesome. She loves children—she's got four grandchildren, you know—and there are cats and little chickens. Doesn't that sound like fun?"

© *1977 by Alice Rudoski.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, Mrs. Gibbons," Margaret said.

Margaret was ten years old and had lived in eight different places. She knew what the place would be like. It would be no different from all the others. The lady would be nice while Mrs. Gibbons was there, but afterward she'd be mean, and Margaret wouldn't like that, and soon Mrs. Gibbons would come and take her away again.

Margaret stared at the road ahead. Her legs were getting stiff from being in the same position so long, and her back ached from sitting up straight. Besides, it was an old car, and the seats were hard. But she wasn't going to tell Mrs. Gibbons she was tired. She wasn't going to tell Mrs. Gibbons anything, not after she'd been so mean about Rodney. Margaret wished she could turn and talk to Rodney, but she knew Mrs. Gibbons wouldn't like that.

Margaret's thoughts were interrupted as Mrs. Gibbons shifted down and turned the car off the highway onto a narrow country road.

"Well, we're almost there," Mrs. Gibbons said. "Only another five miles or so and you'll see your new home." She paused, glancing at Margaret.

"Yes, Mrs. Gibbons," Margaret said.

"Now remember what you promised. You won't talk about—about silly things, will you?"

"No, Mrs. Gibbons."

"You're a big girl now, Margaret. You're too old for make-believe. And Mrs. McNabb said she'll find you some *real* friends."

"Yes, Mrs. Gibbons," Margaret said.

Mrs. Gibbons looked at Margaret, her lips tightening. "You certainly don't seem very excited," she said. "You could at least *try* to like it there."

Margaret's expression was cold and sullen but, for the first time since the trip started, she turned to Mrs. Gibbons as she answered her. "Maybe Rodney won't like it there," she said, slowly and deliberately.

Mrs. Gibbons gasped, and the car came to a jolting stop as she slammed on the brakes. "Rodney! Are you starting that foolishness again? What did I just tell you? And you know what the doctor said. There's no such person as Rodney, so stop that silly talk."

"Yes, Mrs. Gibbons," Margaret said, looking straight ahead again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mrs. Gibbons' hands were clenched on the steering wheel, her knuckles white. "I give up," she said. "What's the use?" She gave an exasperated sigh and turned her attention to the car.

Margaret was too tired to argue, and she wasn't going to even think about what that stupid doctor had said. Rodney was her big brother, and he looked after her, no matter what everyone else said. Mrs. Gibbons would sure get a surprise if she knew that Rodney was sitting right beside Margaret. Didn't she wonder why Margaret had to sit so close to the door?

Margaret almost smiled when she thought how Mrs. Gibbons would jump if Rodney said something to her. Except that Rodney didn't talk. When anyone was mean to Margaret and she told Rodney about it, he just smiled and nodded, and made sure that no one was mean to her again. He took good care of her.

Margaret suddenly realized that the car wasn't moving. The motor was running but they were still stopped on that old road, and it was getting dark outside.

Mrs. Gibbons was wrenching at the gear shift, annoyed and flustered. "Now what's the matter with this old car?" she muttered.

"Yes, Mrs. Gibbons," Margaret said, not certain what she had heard, but sure that she was supposed to be listening.

"Yes, Mrs. Gibbons, no, Mrs. Gibbons," Mrs. Gibbons echoed, her patience suddenly gone. "Can't you say anything else? If it hadn't been for you we wouldn't be in this predicament now—you and that idiot Rodney you dreamed up. Now the gears are locked and I haven't even got a flashlight."

She got out of the car, slamming the door as she left, and went around to the front to lift the hood and peer into the maze underneath.

Margaret sat quietly, thinking about what Mrs. Gibbons had said. Rodney was not an idiot. If it hadn't been for him, Margaret would still be at the last place with that little brat, Benny. And Benny wasn't there any more either. He was always kicking and hitting and when Margaret finally hit him back, she got spanked and sent to her room.

No one listened when she said that Benny had been mean to her. So she told Rodney. He smiled and nodded, and the next day Benny fell down the stairs and died, and Mrs. Gibbons came to take Margaret to the new place. Margaret was lucky she had a big brother to take care of her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mrs. Gibbons had come around to Margaret's side of the car and opened the door. She reached in and grabbed Margaret by the shoulders and shook her. "Will you please pay attention? I've called you three times. You have to help me with this car."

"Yes, Mrs. Gibbons," Margaret said, her shoulders hurting from the rough fingers.

"Move over, closer to the steering wheel. Can you reach that pedal? There—that's the one."

Margaret nodded.

"Now keep your foot down on that pedal until I tell you to take it away. I don't want to stop the motor in case I have trouble with that too. But when I unlock the gears, the car could move if you don't hold that pedal down. Do you understand?"

Without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Gibbons closed the door and went back to work on the gear shift.

Margaret sat awkwardly, her foot pressed hard on the brake pedal. For a long time she watched the faint lights of a farmhouse in the distance, wondering if they were the lights of her new home. Once, above the sound of the car motor, she could hear rattling noises coming from under the hood where Mrs. Gibbons was trying to fix the car. She thought of Mrs. Gibbons, and her shoulders hurt. She told Rodney about it. That made them feel better, but her leg was getting tired.

Margaret wished she could drive a car, and then she'd push on the gas and drive to someplace where no one would ever be mean to her again. She would live with Rodney and he would take care of her.

She heard a clicking sound, and then Mrs. Gibbons was a silhouette against the sky as she reached up to close the hood. Margaret wondered if Rodney could drive a car. Rodney smiled and nodded.

The August 1977 issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* will be on sale June 30.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 470th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . : a story about mining for gem tourmaline, a story so real in its detail and texture that you will feel the rock dust choking your throat . . .

The author, Leila Wolfson, is in her forties and has been, at various times, an artist, a jewelry enamelist, a travel counselor, and an interior decorator. Now she is "a superannuated full-time student majoring in drama." Among her "diversions" are mineralogy, malacology, designing needlepoint, working in the theater, and "goofing off from my studies with a good mystery story."

Ah, glory be and praise the Lord, the new writers keep coming on . . .

THE PLUNGER

by LEILA WOLFSON

Old man Bryant's hollering at me. He's yelling, "Get your behind over here and start muckin' out." He's saying, "What you figurin' on doin', kid, toastin' marshmallows?"

It's five thirty in the morning, and the sky is still the color of cold steel. Here in Maine the frosts haven't come yet. But it's getting pretty near time, seeing as how it's late September already. It's especially cold on days like this one's going to be. The air is so still it feels like it's waiting for something, and you can't see the sunrise until the big sun is just *there,* slanting pink on the white rock.

Me and Toivo Heikkenen made a fire from some dead birch blow-downs. We're standing with our hands out, trying to warm them. The birchwood is sort of punky and it's making more smoke than heat. Toivo's big face, round and flat—almost like something painted on a balloon—is smiling at me. It's sort of appearing and disappearing behind the smoke.

© *1977 by Leila Wolfson.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Toivo's always smiling. He looks as if he's always trying to apologize. His hair is all turned yellow, like an old paper, and his eyes are squinchy at the corners. He's got twisty short legs under a long body. Toivo's not too swift, but he smiles and is willing to work for just 'Gansett beer and promises.

Old man Bryant's down in the bottom of the pit, so I can't see him. All I can hear is him hollering and scaring the birds away. There's this big woodpecker sitting on the old dump trunk at the foot of the waste pile. The dumb bird is beating its brains out, pecking at the rust. He goes flapping into the air real fast when that old man's voice, like a long burp, bounces around the walls of the mine and comes, hollow-like, out of the hole.

"Come on and get your tail down here, Willie-boy," old Bryant is yelling.

So I go, leaving Toivo at the fire where he's now warming his butt, his baggy pants drooping awful close to the flame.

My feet drag through the broken rock around the pit. I bend to pick up a hunk of spar, the color of bone, and heft it, toss it up and down in my hand. Just then the sun stabs our mountain. The light is real sharp and sudden. Everything in the clearing turns shiny and hard to look at. All the mica flakes make mirrors and shoot pink dawn into my eyes.

Old Bryant, the bum, is making his hole straight down where my dad used to mine. Dad worked sort of easy, sloping one side of the cut so's we could muck out with a bucket loader. This new pit, the one Bryant calls by his own name, The Lester Bryant Workings, is rammed into the white rock. It's blasted hard into what was once known as Bill Harlow's Place. Now we've got to haul out the stuff with a hoist. The sun's up and yellow now, but it's still cold and gray 15 feet down in the bottom of the pit.

Toivo's running the hoist. The arm swings round and the cable unreels. As the bucket comes down, it swings. Me and Bryant kind of scramble, twisting our ankles a little on the big chunks of uneven rock. I haul and toss and shovel the waste into the bucket after it clangs down, then it gets pulled up while I watch. I can't take my eyes off the damned bucket. All that heavy rock's swaying back and forth over my head. There's nothing between me and it but the cable. I think about the cable maybe being old. I think about me being mashed to a smear, the way I mash the big brown spiders that live in the cracks between the sharp rocks.

Bryant says, "What are you looking at with your mouth hangin'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

open, Willie?" He's scraping the overburden of rock dust and small fragments from the exposure, looking for the vein of purple and yellow micas, the lepidolite and the cookeite, that trace where the tourmaline might be. Last night's blast opened a little pocket about as big as Toivo's face. It's filled with mucky clay.

Bryant sees crystals in the mud and swipes the surface of one with his thumb. His thumb seems greedy. It's red and bulb-shaped. It's almost as wide as a tongue as it pushes the muck from the crystal.

"Just quartz," he says. "Damn junk!" He raises the shovel and smashes at the pocket. The pretty, bright crystals go flying into a bunch of shapeless chips, like bits of broken glass.

Meanwhile, Toivo has swung the bucket and dropped it into the back of the new truck at the edge of the pit. The bucket goes thump and just lays there, like an overloaded dish.

Old man Bryant waves the shovel at me. He waves it like it don't weigh anything, like it was a cheerleader's stick, maybe. His black hair's powdered with rock dust, his nose snubs up so his nostrils show, and his neck looks as big around as the cable reel. "Get up the ladder and help Toivo wrestle the stuff out." Then he yells to Toivo, "You and Willie move it! We gonna blow two times today."

I got up the ladder, with its splintery bottom step and all the rest crooked, while Toivo leans over, looking down at Bryant. As usual, Toivo's smiling, but he's talking soft in Finnish. He's grinning and saying a whole string of dirty words that Bryant don't know.

Willie, damn it! My name's Bill Harlow, exactly like my dad's. I used to be William, Junior, but now, at 17, I ain't a Junior any more. The old dump truck's lying near where it was on the day the load shifted—the day it fell back with its wheels up and spinning, slid down the hill of waste rock, and broke my dad underneath it. The old truck's settled on its side now. It looks sort of like a dead animal. The woodpecker knocks on its hood every morning.

Bill Harlow's boots fit me real good, and I need to hitch up his pants only a little bit. The last couple of weeks, when I look in the mirror, I see him staring back at me with my own blue eyes.

Toivo Heikkenen and Lester Bryant both worked for my dad. They tell me that Toivo was driving the truck the day it happened. But I know better. It don't matter what they say. I know it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was old man Bryant in the cab that day, his nostrils like extra little pig-eyes.

Before lunchtime we're set to blast. Bryant's been working the jackhammer, leaning into it. All of him's vibrating as the drill pounds its way into the rock. My head aches real bad and my hands are red from packing the dynamite into the holes. Bryant attaches the skinny orange wires and tamps hard. Toivo's taking the truck down the road a way. We've got the blasting machine behind a rock outcrop at the edge of the woods. Now is the time when Bryant connects it all up.

Everything gets quiet—as still as the world when I wake in the dead middle of the night. The rackety compressor's stopped coughing and the truck's parked a quarter of a mile off. Nothing seems to move or breathe. Even the birds don't sing. Then Bryant shouts the word, "Fire!" Three times he calls it and the little word sounds huge on the mountain. And that's when I push the plunger.

The dynamite doesn't go bang, the way most people think it does. It's more like the sound my heart makes when it jumps in my chest—a kind of whoomp noise, but very loud. And then the whoomp grows big enough to fill the valley. It shoves through the softness of the pines and balsams, and beats at the hackmatacks that stand like a camp of tepees in the low places.

When the noise hits the hard rock across the mountain saddle, it rings and rings. It goes running around from one hard place to another, sharpening itself and making itself smaller, until it's worn down to nothing.

In the woods it sounds like it's raining. Bits and chunks of rock come swishing through the leaves and thunking onto the ground. The smoke hangs dark in the pit. It stinks like old rot. The smell grabs me by the throat and makes my head ache again.

Old man Bryant's getting anxious. I heard him say that the money was getting low. It's not hard to listen when he talks to my mom in their room. All I have to do is scroonch on the floor where the baseboard is loose.

I heard him saying how he's sure the big pocket's down there, filled with red and green crystals of gem tourmaline. "All the signs are there, Amy," he said. "You know that Bill woulda wanted me to keep tryin'."

Mom said, "I s'pose."

"I'm doin' it for you and me and Willie. Before we was married,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I told you I was gonna carry on like Bill woulda done."

"But the money—?" Mom sighed.

Bryant said, "It's gonna be okay, Amy. I got a good feelin'."

Then his breathing got louder. He's got a different voice all of a sudden. "Amy?" It's like a question. "Amy-girl?"

And all I could hear was the squeaking of the springs.

My heart went whoomp and my stomach heaved. I got up from the floor, crawled back into my own bed, and curled into a ball with my arms covering my ears . . .

Old man Bryant's hollering at me. We've mucked out again. He's finishing his last drill hole when the jackhammer drops like there's nothing underneath it. His face is covered with white dust. It looks striped where the sweat has run down his cheeks. He's hollering over the cough of the compressor.

"This is the one, Willie!" He thinks he's smiling at me. His mouth looks like a wide sore in his dusty face. "Willie-boy, the drill's gone down into butter. We got it made!"

Like before, we pack and tamp the holes. The wires are colored as if they was made to pull a toy. They're so skinny it don't seem they can do anything very important.

Squatting at the blasting machine, I say, "Mr. Bryant, I forgot!"

He claps me on the shoulder and I feel my skin shrink. "You don't have to call me 'Mr. Bryant,' Willie. We're family. Now, what'd you forget?"

"Mr. Bryant," I say, "I forgot and left the box of blasting caps where we're going to blow."

"Oh, damn." He's not hollering. He's feeling too good. "Okay, Willie. I'll get 'em."

Toivo's driven the truck away. Good old Toivo. Bryant has gone back to the pit. The wires are all connected. My hands are on the plunger and my knuckles look like white knobs. Everything's gotten awful quiet.

I ain't gonna yell "Fire" even once.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 471st "first story" to be published in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . It is always astonishing to us to learn which themes young writers choose for their first stories. Astonishing and reassuring for the future of the crime-detective short story . . . a tale of eavesdropping, which can also be a dangerous game . . .

The author, T. M. Adams, was twenty-two when he submitted his first story. After two years of college, he took an indefinite leave of absence and started writing fiction, supporting himself by odd jobs, "currently working the graveyard shift on the desk at a local motel." He also informed us: "I don't have any hobbies—just expenses" . . .

ALFRED KARNS, ACCESSORY

by T. M. ADAMS

Mr. Karns entered his favorite restaurant, hungry, carefree, and whistling. He found his usual booth in the corner, fringed and hidden by potted palms, and took his seat in the dimness he thought of as "atmosphere." The waitress appeared and he ordered the Lobster Surprise, content in the knowledge that it would take at least half an hour to prepare. He didn't mind. This booth was the one he liked best because it was discreetly invisible, and because its acoustics served up the meat of the conversations going on around him.

It wasn't, he would assure you, that he was an eavesdropper. His interest was not in learning intimate secrets. It was just that now that his wife was gone and his children grown up, he missed the conviviality of mealtimes. He hadn't the slightest intention of remarrying or rooming with other people his age—his pension was small enough to preclude the first possibility and large enough to prevent the second.

© 1977 by T. M. Adams.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

No, he just wanted to hear voices at mealtime, the bland but solid conversation of people who were out and about in the world. It was enough to know, each day at lunchtime, that the wheels and seasons were still turning, that the bosses and children were still screaming, that the neighbors and governments were still overspending—in short, that Life was still continuing, with or without Mr. Karns's active participation.

To be sure, at dinnertime he always hoped for something a little spicier—the more malicious office gossip, perhaps, or the careful plans of lovers. Words like those were usually whispered, of course, but on nights like this one, when the restaurant was almost empty, it was possible to hear even the whispers from the table he was now facing. It was his preferred table for listening-in for another reason: although he could see whoever sat there, they were not likely to see him.

He was pleased to find the facing table empty tonight; he liked to monitor a conversation from its beginning, although there were times when it was more fun to try to guess the subject of a discussion intercepted in mid-course. Now that he was in position, however, he wanted the other table occupied as soon as possible.

The waitress, a blank-faced young woman with blonde hair, stopped by to inform Mr. Karns that his Lobster Surprise would take a little longer than expected. He nodded affably and noted that a pair of chatting women were approaching the facing table.

The waitress seated the pair—a charming white-haired lady of some frailty and her rather sharp-faced middle-aged companion. The deliberate dowdiness of the younger woman's dress disappointed Mr. Karns; he had been hoping to overhear something light and frivolous.

The waitress gave them menus and left. "And what would you like tonight, Mother?" the younger woman finally asked, going up a notch or two in Mr. Karns's estimation for her solicitousness.

The older woman's fingers fluttered uncertainly at the catch of her purse. She decided at last, and her voice was very sweet, Mr. Karns thought, soft but clear.

"Well, dear, I think I'd like the salad with French dressing, the baked stuffed clams for an appetizer . . . the candied ham and a side order of Brussels sprouts. Iced tea to drink, and later the strawberry shortcake and coffee."

Mr. Karns marveled at her appetite. How few of us stand up to old age so well, he thought.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I think I'll have the same," the daughter said, which Mr. Karns thought a little odd with so much to choose from. What was more puzzling was the old woman's reaction to her daughter's choice—a hunching of the shoulders and very evident agitation.

The waitress bobbed up to their table again and the younger woman ordered crisply: "Salad with French, please. The clams for appetizer, the candied ham, and an order of Brussels sprouts. And I'll have the iced tea with that, thanks."

Her mother, who had looked throughout as though she were desperately anxious to interrupt, cut in as soon as her daughter had finished and added, in an almost pleading tone, "I'll have the same, please."

"A bowl of chowder and a glass of hot tea for my mother," the younger woman ordered.

"No, that's all right, dear. I'll have the same as you," her mother said hastily.

The younger woman gave the waitress a cold tight smile.

"Please excuse my mother," she said, a little too loudly. "She is completely senile and doesn't know what she is saying. She will have a bowl of chowder and a cup of hot tea."

Her mother was now quite motionless, except for the fingers still playing aimlessly with the catch of her purse. The waitress turned away and Mr. Karns caught a glimpse of her face. It was still blank, but not, he thought, effortlessly so.

What ghastly behavior! Mr. Karns spent the next five minutes hoping the awkward silence that had descended on the pair would continue unbroken. Eventually the salad arrived. And the chowder. The waitress departed hastily.

The older woman picked up her spoon and stirred the chowder, looking into the bowl distastefully. "I hate chowder," she murmured, as though to no one in particular.

Let's face it, Mr. Karns thought. Some of us, as we grow older, cannot follow our doctors' instructions. The daughter may just be looking out for her mother's welfare. Doing that day in and day out, she could easily get a little fed up, especially if her mother insisted on ordering things she was not supposed to eat. Perhaps this one time she had lost her temper—

"I hate salad," the younger woman said succinctly, "but I'm going to enjoy this one. Do you know what this salad is for, Mother?" She gestured with a forkful of greens, then bent forward slightly, dropping her voice as she said, "This is for Harvey Rice,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mother. The boy you threw out of the house for not wearing a necktie, remember? This is for Harvey Rice, who never called on me again." And she delicately but rapidly consumed the salad, making an exaggerated show of pleasure, while her mother looked on, listlessly sipping her chowder.

This was horrible—this brief glimpse through a maiden-lady's keyhole would trouble Mr. Karns's sleep for years. As the waitress swooped by to deposit his appetizer, Mr. Karns wished she would offer him a loud assurance about his Lobster Surprise, calling attention to his presence so that this dreadful woman would realize she was being overheard and stop her embarrassing performance—

"Do you know what *this* is for, Mother?" The younger woman brandished her little shellfish fork above the largest of the clams. "This is for twelve years of piano lessons at Mrs. de Puy's." She pointed to the second largest clam. "And this is for Iris Anderson's birthday party, which you wouldn't let me go to because it rained." Again, pointing to a clam, "And this is for the kitten you wouldn't let me keep."

And her eating of the clams was an extravagant burlesque of delectation, accompanied by such eye-rolling and lip-smacking that by the time the main course arrived, Mr. Karns thought that he himself would never want to eat anything again. The worst of it was the way the old lady's eyes followed each forkful of her daughter's food, as though she hadn't eaten at all that day, as if she hadn't had a real meal in many days.

It's sickening, Mr. Karns thought. He couldn't possibly complain to the waitress about it. No, that would mean confronting the daughter, and there was something too—too intimate about even talking to her. He had to keep her at arm's length, but still manage somehow to stop her. For he felt that no matter how many times she had staged this little scene before, this time she was going too far—

"Do you know what this ham is for, Mother? This is for the college education I never had because you were sick that year. And the Brussels sprouts are for all the years I nursed you."

I could clear my throat, Mr. Karns thought. Just clear my throat, and she would hear it and realize that I can hear her, and then she would stop. That's what I could do.

Then, as the waitress passed between them, he considered the unfairness of it. Couldn't his own children raise a similar host of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grievances? Couldn't any children? Where does this hatred of hers come from, this hatred unforgiving enough to abuse the helpless?

He would clear his throat, and that would be that—

"And the shortcake? That's for our forty-three years together, Mother. Forty-three years. Why don't you finish your chowder, Mother? Or your tea? Don't you like tea, Mother?"

He couldn't do it. He couldn't make a sound. She had gone too far and he had listened. He couldn't humiliate them now. Yes, it would be his humiliation, too. His, the old woman's, and—but the worst of it was that the unnatural daughter might be beyond embarrassment. She might even address him directly, draw him into it!

No, he had to sit here, quiet and unmoving, until they left. And would he be able to eat then? And would he be able to look his face in the mirror that night, his old face, his own helpless face—

It was over. The younger woman, after a final verbal blow at her mother, left for the women's lounge. Mr. Karns felt a slight easing of tension. But that feeling did not last long.

As soon as her daughter was out of sight, the old woman reached into her purse and fumbled among the pharmacopoeia of green- and brown-tinted bottles until she located the one she wanted. Quickly, without even glancing around, she pried off the cap and emptied the contents of the bottle into her daughter's coffee; then she picked up the spoon next to the cup, stirred the coffee, wiped the spoon clean on her napkin, and replaced both spoon and bottle.

Oh, my, thought Mr. Karns—

The old lady was finishing her chowder when her daughter returned. The younger woman seated herself and raised her coffee cup carelessly, just holding it, the way people hold cigarettes. She wore a self-satisfied smile.

He was trying desperately to think whether anything ever prescribed to him could be fatal in a large dose. Undoubtedly, undoubtedly. But surely she'd taste it. And if not—well, he didn't *know* it was poison; it could just be something harmless. Besides, how could he intervene at this stage? What could he possibly say? And if he were wrong—

The younger woman put the cup to her lips.

"What's *that* for?" her mother asked abruptly. "The coffee?"

The younger woman's reaction was at first as astonished as Mr. Karns'. But then, slowly, the saccharine smile came back to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

daughter's face. Her reply had the corrosive sweetness of cheap candy; it made the teeth hurt.

"Mother, this is for bringing me into the world."

And as she emptied the cup, her mother said, "Fair enough, dear. Fair enough."

He had to stop it. He would have to admit he'd been spying on them, have to tell her she'd been poisoned. No. How about, "Couldn't help but notice—happened to overhear your remark about your mother's mental state—she seems to have accidentally—"

They had paid their bill by now. His view of them was blocked by the waitress bearing his Lobster Surprise on a tray. When she turned away from him to clear the newly vacated table, he caught sight of them at the door.

He couldn't sit still and be accessory to a murder. Wasn't it bad enough that he had allowed that shameful scene to go on for so long? It wasn't as though the two acts of omission canceled each other out—

He cleared his throat to attract the waitress' attention, found himself staring at their table, which was as clear as if they had never been there, and glanced back at the door.

They were gone.

"Yes, sir, is your lobster all right?" the waitress was asking, her face as blank as ever. Uncomprehending. Unsympathetic. Young.

He stammered, and then, as though it were a reasonable comment to make after calling her over, he heard himself saying, "Fair enough."

She looked back at him, puzzled. Probably thinks I'm completely senile, he thought. Probably thinks I don't know what I'm saying. He suddenly realized that he was very hungry.

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE HARDCOVERS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	ON SALE
McCloy, Helen	THE IMPOSTOR	Dodd, Mead & Co.	$6.95	6/77
Price, Anthony	WAR GAME	Doubleday & Co., Inc.	7.95	6/10
Scott, Jack S.	THE BASTARD'S NAME WAS BRISTOW	Harper & Row	7.95	6/8
Stein, Aaron Marc	BODY SEARCH	Doubleday & Co., Inc.	6.95	6/3
Summerton, Margaret	A DARK AND SECRET PLACE	Doubleday & Co., Inc.	6.95	6/3

Titles and Data Supplied by the Publishers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* detective story by

E. X. FERRARS

At first it seemed to Chief Superintendent Mellor a simple enough case. Then the death of Mr. Crick took an odd turn—an odd turn indeed . . .

A VERY SMALL CLUE

by E. X. FERRARS

Nobody saw the letter until they moved the dead old man. His head had covered it as he lay sprawled across the desk and while the photographers had taken their photographs and the fingerprint men had done their work, the envelope had remained hidden. But when at last the ambulance men had lifted the body onto the stretcher to take it out of the room, there was the letter, lying on the blood-soaked blotter. Stamped and addressed.

A letter, of course, was to have been expected. It had been the absence of one that had given Chief Superintendent Mellor the itchy feeling that this was not the simple suicide it had appeared at first glance. Suicides almost always leave letters. And the dead man's housekeeper, who had found the body after she had got home from a visit to her sister and had telephoned the police, had told them tearfully that Mr. Crick was the kindest, the most considerate of men. But it was not the act of a kind and considerate man to end his life without leaving behind a letter that said no one but himself was to blame for his death.

And here was the letter on the desk, so perhaps it was suicide after all.

The envelope was slightly splashed with blood and the writing on it was shaky, but it was perfectly legible and it was addressed to Chief Superintendent Mellor.

That took him by surprise.

He had the envelope tested for fingerprints before he opened it and was told there were only smudged prints on it, except for one

© *1977 by E. X. Ferrars.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the stamp, and that the probability was they had all been made by the dead man. It was the same with the single sheet of paper that Mellor found in the envelope.

The letter was brief.

"Sir: This is to confess to you that I am the murderer of Miss Christine Beddoes, of The Beeches, Grove Avenue. I will not go into my motive for killing her except to say that I had thought we were to be married, but apparently I was mistaken. Now I find that I cannot live with what I have done and am about to take my own life. I am, Yours, A. Crick."

Mellor showed the letter to Sergeant Arkell, who was standing beside him.

Arkell remarked, "Very formal. Signs it as if he was writing to the newspapers."

"He was a solicitor," Mellor said. "Perhaps that made him formal about murder. A. Crick—I wonder what the A stood for."

"Arthur, sir." The housekeeper, a wrinkled little woman who, now that the body was gone from the room, seemed to have lost the fear she had had at first, looked expectantly at Mellor, as if she hoped to be allowed to read the letter too.

He did not show it to her.

"Do you know a Miss Christine Beddoes?" he asked.

"Miss Beddoes who lives next door? Yes, of course I do."

"Did Mr. Crick know her well?"

"I don't know what you mean by well," she said. "He was a neighborly sort of man, always said good morning and that kind of thing, but she wasn't his sort."

"What do you mean, not his sort?"

She shrugged in a way that expressed a certain disapproval of Miss Christine Beddoes.

Mellor put the letter back into its envelope.

"Well, it's time we went next door," he said to Arkell. "I suppose that's where we'll find her. There's no point in trying to conceal a body if you're going to kill yourself right after the murder—though it's true the letter sounds as if he didn't know he'd feel like suicide till after he'd done the job."

"Murder?" the housekeeper cried. "Who's murdered who?"

"That remains to be seen," Mellor said. "But I'm afraid we're going to find Miss Beddoes next door with a bullet through her brain. I hope to God he made a neat job of it. If there's anything I hate, it's a messy shooting."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mellor strode out of the room and Arkell followed him.

They went next door to The Beeches, a spacious bungalow which was almost hidden from the street by a high beech hedge. But Mellor, as it turned out, had been only partly correct about what they would find there. He had been right in thinking Miss Beddoes would be at home, but when she opened the door to them it was evident she had no bullet in her brain or anywhere else in her well-proportioned body.

She was a slender woman of about 28, with bright greenish eyes touched up with a good deal of eye shadow, heavy straight hair of a not very convincing shade of auburn that fell to her shoulders, and she was wearing a pale green housecoat of some thick, luxurious-looking silk.

Mellor identified himself and the sergeant and asked if they might come in.

"Of course," Miss Beddoes said. "I'm glad you came. I saw the police cars and the ambulance next door and I knew something awful must have happened and I thought of coming over to ask if I could help. But then I thought I'd only be in the way and that if you wanted me you'd come here."

She led them into a big bright sitting room furnished with what Mellor thought were some oddly shaped chairs and low tables and with some strange sculptures standing about that consisted mainly of holes. "Has something happened to poor Mr. Crick?"

"He's dead," Mellor said. "Shot, sitting at his desk. His housekeeper found him."

"Shot? Do you mean he shot himself? Committed suicide?" Her voice went high and shrill. Her voice was the least attractive thing about her. It was thin and nasal. "But why? Why ever should he do a thing like that?"

"His letter said it was suicide," Mellor replied. "But it also said he'd murdered you, which happens not to be true. So perhaps the rest of it isn't true either. What do you think about that, Miss Beddoes? We thought perhaps you could help us sort it out. First, had you ever been engaged to him? His letter implied that you had. Had you broken it off recently?"

She sank into one of the deep armchairs, the skirt of her housecoat flowing out around her.

"I don't understand," she said. "He wrote that he'd *murdered* me? *Me?* Whatever could he have been thinking about? And we were never engaged—certainly not. Well, that's to say . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her fingers plucked at the silk of her skirt. There was rather more tension in her face than Mellor had noticed at first. "Perhaps it's just possible he misunderstood our friendship. It never occurred to me before, but he was an old-fashioned sort of man, you know. He may have taken me more seriously than I realized. How sad—how terribly sad. Because his mind must have gone at the end, mustn't it, if he believed he'd murdered me? And he was such an intelligent man."

"When did you see him last?" Mellor asked.

"Two or three days ago," she said. "During the weekend. Yes, it was on Sunday. He came in for a drink before lunch, as he quite often did."

"Did you quarrel?"

"Oh, no. No, it was all just as usual. I think we talked mainly about our gardens. We generally did. We hadn't much else in common, and he didn't stay long."

"How long have you known him, Miss Beddoes?"

"About a year. He called on me with a basket of vegetables from his garden soon after I moved in. He was always very kind. He was a widower, you know, and I think he was lonely."

"But on Sunday he seemed to you quite normal? Not depressed, excitable, overwrought?"

She gave a shake of her head. But then she frowned.

"As a matter of fact, I did wonder if he was feeling well. He was more silent than usual. But I didn't give it much thought. He was a quiet sort of man."

"You see, he did a certain rather strange thing this evening," Mellor said. "Apart, I mean, from confessing to a murder that he hadn't got around to committing. He put a stamp on the letter he left on his desk, the envelope addressed to me. I find that distinctly odd."

"A stamp?" she said. "Is there anything strange about putting a stamp on an envelope?"

"Who was going to post that letter?" he asked. "Not Mr. Crick himself. And when his housekeeper found him, as he must have known she would, she called the police in the natural way, by telephone."

Miss Beddoes gave a bewildered shake of her head. "I don't understand. I can only think that if he was in the state of mind to think he'd murdered me, he didn't know what he was doing."

"Of course that's possible," Mellor agreed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A stamp's a very small thing," she said.

"Very small. All the same, I'd like to know how you spent the evening, Miss Beddoes. Say from about eight o'clock to ten."

She stiffened in her deep chair. "How *I* spent it? What are you thinking of?"

"I'm thinking," Mellor said, "that Mr. Crick, having a legal sort of mind and wanting to leave everything in proper order, might have written his letter to me earlier in the evening, intending to come here, kill you, then on his way home mail his letter—there's a mail box just outside, I noticed—then go home and kill himself. But something prevented him doing what he intended. Somebody could have known just what he was planning to do and got into his house and shot him before Mr. Crick himself could commit murder."

"Someone?" She pressed a finger against her bosom, pointing at herself. "Me? You're thinking of me?"

"I only asked you how you spent the evening," he answered.

She gave a soft laugh and seemed to relax. "Then I'll tell you. I went to a party given by Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler, who live at Number Twelve Grove Avenue. I got there about eight o'clock and I came home only a little while before you got here. I'd just had time to change out of my evening dress when you arrived."

"Will Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler be able to say that you didn't leave even for a little while during the evening?" he asked. "Number Twelve can't be very far from here."

"Oh, yes, they'll be quite sure," she said. "So will several other people. It was a small party. If I'd left for a time it would certainly have been noticed. I'm not a murderess, Mr. Mellor."

"Then I can think of only one other explanation," Mellor said, "and perhaps you can help me with that. For instance, I'm sure you can tell me whether the man who did the murder is still here, or has he gone without you? You were just going to leave with him, weren't you, when we showed up? You're fully dressed under that handsome housecoat."

Catching Arkell's eye, the Superintendent gave a slight nod and Arkell went quietly out of the room.

"I may as well tell you," Mellor went on, "that if he hasn't gone already, it's too late now, because the house is surrounded."

As he spoke there was the sound of a shot in the garden. It was followed by excited cries, then by a voice shouting orders.

The woman leaped to her feet.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The fool, the fool, I told him it wouldn't work!" she cried. "But he said after the old man saw him he had to get rid of him, and he said I'd have to go with him, because he was sure if I didn't I'd talk. Oh, the fool! As if I'd ever have talked. But he never trusted anybody."

"And no doubt he said he'd manage it so no one would wonder why you'd disappeared," Mellor said. "We were supposed to be looking for a dead woman, not a live one."

The door was thrown open and Arkell reappeared, accompanied by a constable. They had a man between them who was struggling fiercely as each of them gripped him by an arm. He was a short squat man with crudely shaped features, which in spite of their coarseness bore a resemblance to the delicate features of the woman.

"Nobody hurt," Arkell said. "He tried shooting it out, but Fred here winged him."

"Ah, I see, I see—one of the old familiar faces," Mellor said. "Your brother, Miss Beddoes? Though his name was Hewitt when I heard of him last. How long since you escaped from Parkhurst, Hewitt? Three days? Seems it was hardly worth the effort. And Arthur Crick saw you here this evening, getting ready to leave, and recognised you, didn't he? He'd seen you in court sometime, I suppose.

"But how did you persuade him to write that letter before you killed him? By the threat of a beating up, was it? He knew you were going to kill him anyhow, but in return for that letter you did it painlessly. But as your sister said, he was a very intelligent man. With you standing over him, he quietly put a stamp on the envelope. I expect that seemed to you a quite normal thing to do. But in fact he was leaving me a message that that letter wasn't what it seemed. So even if the two of you had got away in time, we'd have tracked you down sooner or later. Now you can both come along to the police station."

And wearily, because he had had a long day and knew that there was a long night ahead of him, Mellor added the words of the official warning.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY NEWSLETTER

CRIME DOSSIER

by OTTO PENZLER

This column has previously discussed books of short stories with affection because of a firm conviction that the short tale is the best and most natural form of the mystery genre. Fortunately, many publishers continue to produce volumes of fine short fiction, despite the persistently mournful theory of the unsalability of short-story collections. Among the happy events of the recent past, and bright expectations for the immediate future:

REX STOUT: Although Nero Wolfe does not appear in *Justice Ends at Home and Other Stories* (Viking, $8.95), the splendid literary style of the late author does. The stories, compiled and edited by Professor John J. McAleer, the pre-eminent Stout scholar, were published prior to the first appearance of the great detective of West 35th Street and are, therefore, of historical significance.

MICHAEL GILBERT: Watch for *Petrella at Q* (Harper & Row), which will be out later this year. The consistently excellent author has assembled here a novelette and 11 short stories, together with a fascinating profile of his series detective, Patrick Petrella, which serves as an introduction.

JOAN AIKEN: This popular writer of weird and other fiction has produced a lovely mixture of romance, fantasy, and suspense in *The Far Forests* (Viking, $7.95). A few are pretty far out, but most are truly fine, intelligent tales that will astound all but the impossible to please.

RAFFLES: In addition to Barry Perowne's superb *Raffles of the Albany* (St. Martin's Press, $8.95), mentioned in an earlier column, the famous amateur cracksman appears in *Raffles* (Putnam, $7.95) by a pseudonymous author using the name David Fletcher. The publisher inexplicably attempts to give the book the guise of a novel by using the term "A Novel" on the dust wrapper and by excluding a table of contents, but don't be misled. They are short stories, and good ones.

RAYMOND CHANDLER: Nothing new here, but a nice series

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of paperback reprints is worth a mention and an endorsement. Ballantine Books has reissued most of Chandler's works in a handsome format, including *The Simple Art of Murder* ($1.75), an essay and four stories, and *Trouble Is My Business* ($1.95), four longish tales.

OTHERS: Clear some shelf space for these: a Nick Velvet collection by Edward D. Hoch, an Inspector Ghote collection by H. R. F. Keating, the first complete Lew Archer collection by Ross Macdonald, a Nick Noble collection by the late Anthony Boucher, and at least two more volumes from the prolific master of the macabre, Robert Bloch.

© 1977 by Otto Penzler.

BLOODY VISIONS

by CHRIS STEINBRUNNER

Docu-dramas are increasingly visible on television, the medium which has after all given news reporting an almost instant immediacy. Across the 1977–78 season a twelve-program series of hour-long specials is being prepared, called *Caught:* in-depth recreations of some of the most cunning crimes of the Twentieth Century. The syndicated show is produced by the award-winning Isaac Kleinerman, a distinguished documentary filmmaker (*Victory at Sea, 21st Century).*

The first program details three infamous holdups which netted the robbers more than $13 million: the incredible Brinks robbery by the Boston waterfront, the bank-truck heist engineered at a quiet New Jersey church, and the tunnel looting of the safety-deposit boxes and vaults of the Société General bank in Nice, France. On-location filming recreates each case, while the actual participants (police, witnesses, journalists) replay their roles. Arthur Hill (*Owen Marshall, Counselor at Law*) makes a strong host-narrator. Future topics include bombings, famous impostors, and computer crimes. Kleinerman especially wants to do "*the* story of Prohibition" and a study of the harrowing increase in hostage-taking. As only four specials are being planned for this year, the preparations for each show are thorough; *Caught* probes fascinating real-life crimes close-up.

Fritz Lang, who gave us the master criminal Dr. Mabuse, the murderer *M,* and the stalking cop of *The Big Heat,* was always an innovative mystery-film creator. Scholarly Lotte Eisner, who authored *The Haunted Screen,* draws on her long friendship and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

correspondence with the late director to plumb the depths of his Germanic melodrama *(Fritz Lang,* Oxford University Press).

Alfred Hitchcock, the Master, is still in touch, about to start his 54th film, a spy-suspense story based on the Ronald Kirkbride novel, *The Short Night.* (Meantime, Mel Brooks' affectionate send-up of Hitchcock themes, *High Anxiety,* is right now being shot in San Francisco.) Robert A. Harris and Michael S. Lasky's *The Films of Alfred Hitchcock* (Citadel) is a comprehensive pictorial chronicle of the great man's half century of creativity, and is a good job. Higher marks, though, go to *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* (Hopkinson and Blake), a loving, fascinating journey into the dark and menacing Hitchcockian worlds by Professor Donald Spoto of the New School of Social Research. Every aspect of the director's complex structure of drama is explored—including the "McGuffin," that pursuit of nonexistent lions in the Scottish Highlands—and Hitch has stated he likes the book, it's claimed. And well he might, for Spoto has given him his due: the unrivaled genius of screen mystery.

© 1977 by Chris Steinbrunner.

INTERVIEW: ROBERT L. FISH

One of the most honored of contemporary mystery writers, Robert L. Fish has been the recipient of two Edgar Allan Poe awards from the Mystery Writers of America, plus several nominations. He has created a retinue of memorable characters, notably Captain Jose Da Silva of the Brazilian police, New York City police lieutenant Clancy (who became *Bullitt* in the film), and the delightful rogue Kek Huuygens, a smuggler. But the most popular of his characters is the hero of Fish's first published story, the incredible Schlock Homes of Bagel Street, who first appeared in *EQMM* in 1961 along with Dr. Watney and Professor Marty.

EQMM: You are a prolific writer, with about 30 books and countless short stories to your credit in the past 17 years, but you have produced only about two dozen Schlock Homes stories in that time. Why?

FISH: Ideas. They just don't come that easily to me. Don't ask me where I get my ideas. I don't know. People always come up to me at cocktail parties and ask me that question. The only thing I *do* know is that I don't get ideas at cocktail parties.

EQMM: Perhaps no form of literature is more difficult to successfully produce than the parody-pastiche, yet you tried it with your first story. Why did you take on something so difficult, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

why about Sherlock Holmes, who has been parodied by more writers than any character ever created?

FISH: I'd been a Sherlock Holmes fan for a long time, most of my life. I started reading him even before I read P. G. Wodehouse, whom I loved when I was 12, so that's going back a way. I'd never written a thing in my life and one day just found some free time on my hands and thought I'd like to write a short story.

EQMM: Did you have a specific idea in mind?

FISH: I had a specific line in mind. Although I'm a great admirer of Holmes, I have to say some of his deductions and analyses are pretty absurd. So I always thought the line, "Well, it had to be that or something else," was funny in that context. I wrote a short story around that line, and it turned out to be a Sherlock Holmes parody. The name Schlock Homes, by the way, has no profound origin. It just came to me.

EQMM: Why do you find it more difficult to come up with ideas for the Schlock Homes stories than for novels and stories about your other series characters?

FISH: It's not just finding an idea, but finding the double meaning that's so tough. The easy part is the puns. They just keep coming.

EQMM: Anthony Boucher, Lenore Glen Offord, Ellery Queen, and Vincent Starrett have all said good things about the Schlock Homes stories. How do you rate them with your other work?

FISH: I think they're the best stuff I've written.

THE JURY BOX

by JON L. BREEN

The increasing popularity of the historical detective novel has resulted in a number of capable series sleuths who pursue their profession in other times. Among them are such Bow Street Runners as Richard Falkirk's Blackstone and J. J. Jeffreys' Jeremy Sturrock plus such Victorian bobbies as Peter Lovesey's Sergeant Cribb, Jean Stubbs' Inspector Lintott, and Francis Selwyn's incomparable Sergeant Verity, who may be the greatest of them all. His third case, *Sergeant Verity Presents His Compliments* (Stein and Day, $7.95) offers a rich mixture of classical detection, violent action, social history, and some of the most erotic passages in contemporary crime fiction.

Vanquished to the hiring room, normally a dead end for inept and over-the-hill policemen, Verity is employed by wealthy Rich-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ard Jervis to prove the death of his brother, the late Lord Henry, was murder, though all evidence points to an accident. In his fondness for impossible crimes, Mr. Selwyn is very near in spirit to the pioneer of the historical detective novel and former proprietor of this column, the late John Dickson Carr. (****)

Still another British policeman of the Victorian era is John Buxton Hilton's Thomas Brunt, who investigates the disappearance of a young servant girl in the High Peak village of Piper's Fold in *Gamekeeper's Gallows* (St. Martin's Press, $7.95). Hilton offers interesting details on railroading, lead-mining, and English village life in the 1870's along with an absorbing mystery of human character. (***)

*** Charles A. Goodrum: *Dewey Decimated,* Crown, $7.95. Murder strikes at Washington D.C.'s prestigious Werner-Bok Library, and retired librarian Edward George turns amateur sleuth. Goodrum's debut offers likeable characters, solid detection, an interesting rare-book racket, and a thorough exploration of the criminous possibilities in a large library. The murderer, alas, is too easily spotted, especially by gothic fans.

*** Donald E. Westlake: *Enough,* M. Evans, $8.95. Two Westlake stories here, the novel-length "A Travesty" and the non-mystery Hollywood novelette "Ordo." In the lead story, movie critic Carey Thorpe helps the police solve several mysterious crimes, including a locked room, a dying message, and a footprints-in-the-snow problem, while concealing his own culpability in his girlfriend's death. The author is not in top form in this satiric send-up of the whole mystery genre, but there can never be enough Westlake.

*** Edmund Ward: *The Main Chance,* Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, $7.95. The tale of ambitious London solicitor David Main, a complex character who will produce mixed feelings in most readers, is a sort of law-office procedural. Enthralling legal melodrama by the author of several British TV serials. This would make another good one.

** Elizabeth Lemarchand: *Step in the Dark,* Walker, $6.95. Superintendent Pollard investigates a mysterious death and a rare-book theft from the Ramsden Literary and Scientific Society. This is a cerebral mystery in the classic tradition, complete with map and list of characters, with a solution that, though strictly fair, will exasperate many.

** Jim Henaghan: *Azor,* St. Martin's Press, $8.95. Jeff Pride, travel agent, investigator, and macho sentimentalist, chases a political assassin across Spain in his first hardcover case. Credits: smooth style, lots of action, vivid setting. Debits: unnecessary length, improbabilities, and the most overused surprise ending in mystery fiction.

** John Creasey as Kyle Hunt:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Man Who Was Not Himself, Stein and Day, $6.95. The final novel about psychiatrist Manny Cellini has a terrific opening situation—a man wakes up in another man's bed, apparently living another man's life—but a very unconvincing resolution. Few will stop in the middle though.

It has been a banner month for short-story collections. Julian Symons' *How to Trap a Crook* (Davis Publications, $1.35), edited and introduced by Ellery Queen, is the first U.S. collection by one of the finest and most versatile writers in the genre. The thirteen stories are all from EQMM. (****)

Barry Perowne's *Raffles of the Albany* (St. Martin's Press, $8.95) has eleven pastiches, seven from EQMM, including the amateur cracksman's two encounters with A. Conan Doyle. (***)

Robert Bloch's *The King of Terrors* (The Mysterious Press, P.O. Box 334, East Station, Yonkers, N.Y. 10704; $10.00; $20.00 for signed, limited edition) has fourteen tales from a magician of the short crime story. Most have appeared in Bloch's paperback collections but are new to hard covers. (***)

© 1977 by Jon L. Breen.

REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS

WINKING AT THE BRIM, by Gladys Mitchell. McKay-Washburn, $6.95.

When McKay-Washburn reintroduced classic British detective novelist Gladys Mitchell (*Watson's Choice*, 1976) to American readers, the eccentric and indomitable Dame Beatrice Bradley found herself involved with one immortal hero, Sherlock Holmes. This time the shrewd psychiatrist-sleuth encounters another sort of "immortal" figure—the Loch Ness monster, or, to be precise, one of Nessie's sisters or cousins.

There's plenty of mystery, including when a large pale eye winks at a member of the hunting party from above the watery depths of the loch, and when a body is found in a nearby cottage. Will Dame Beatrice sight the monster before she spots the culprit? Surprises, as always, and dotty charm.

MIDNIGHT SPECIALS, An Anthology for Train Buffs and Suspense Aficionados, edited by Bill Pronzini. Bobbs-Merrill, $10.95. Illustrated.

This rich anthology is tailor-made for train buffs and suspense readers alike. In these pages you'll travel on passenger, freight and subway trains in this country and abroad, venturing from the early days of railroading through the present and into tomorrow. You'll meet signalmen, gandy dancers, hobos, highballing engineers, foreign correspondents, railroad bulls, thieves, spies, and clever murderers. They congregate in coaches, salon cars, cabooses, and gondolas and—in one special story—on a train that is bound for Hell.

Authors include Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Alfred Noyes, Irvin S. Cobb, James M. Cain, Cornell Woolrich, Ellery Queen, Georges Simenon, Robert Bloch, and Bill Pronzini.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE GENUINE ARTICLE, by A. B. Guthrie, Jr. Houghton Mifflin Company, $7.95.

In a sequel to *Wild Pitch*, the bestselling author of *The Big Sky* and *The Way West* narrates the further adventures of Sheriff Chick Charleston and Jason Beard and their collaboration in solving a western murder mystery. The *Times Book Review* called *Wild Pitch* "a tightly plotted, beautifully worked-out example of the detective story." *Saturday Review* termed it "tough, taut, and terrific." Jack Schaefer wrote, "For years now I have been a faithful fan of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin. I could easily become just as faithful a fan of Chick Charleston and Jason Beard."

BREATH OF BRIMSTONE, by Anthea Fraser. Dodd, Mead, $6.95.

A charming English seaside town is the setting for the latest novel of suspense by Anthea Fraser, author of *Whistler's Lane* and *Home Through the Dark*. Shortly before Celia Bannerman met Lucas Todd, she had a sense of foreboding as if something cold and unknown was reaching out to her. When sinister things began happening, her husband and her kind practical mother-in-law thought she was being absurd to blame Lucas. But Celia knew her enemy's true name was Lucifer, that he would destroy her world to gain possession of her.

"A taut contemporary satanic tale."—*ALA Booklist*

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	RETAIL PRICE	DISCOUNTED PRICE
Aiken, Joan	THE FAR FORESTS	Viking	$7.95	$6.35
Alexander, Patrick	DEATH OF A THIN-SKINNED ANIMAL	Dutton	8.95	6.95
Creasey, John	THE MAN WHO WAS NOT HIMSELF	Stein & Day	6.95	5.50
Fletcher, David	RAFFLES	Putnam	7.95	6.35
Ford, Hilary	A BRIDE FOR BEDIVERE	Harper & Row	8.95	6.95
Fraser, Anthea	BREATH OF BRIMSTONE	Dodd, Mead	6.95	5.50
Goodrum, Charles A.	DEWEY DECIMATED	Crown	7.95	6.35
Guthrie, A. B. Jr.	THE GENUINE ARTICLE	Houghton Mifflin	7.95	6.35
Henaghan, Jim	AZOR	St. Martin's Press	8.95	6.95
Hilton, John Buxton	GAMEKEEPER'S GALLOWS	St. Martin's Press	7.95	6.35
Edited by John McAleer	JUSTICE ENDS AT HOME AND OTHER STORIES	Viking	8.95	6.95
Mitchell, Gladys	WINKING AT THE BRIM	McKay-Washburn	6.95	5.50
Edited by Bill Pronzini	MIDNIGHT SPECIALS: An Anthology for TRAIN BUFFS and SUSPENSE AFICIONADOS	Bobbs-Merrill	10.95	8.50
Selwyn, Francis	SERGEANT VERITY PRESENTS HIS COMPLIMENTS	Stein & Day	7.95	6.35
Simenon, Georges	MAIGRET AND THE SPINSTER	Harcourt Brace Jovanovich	6.95	5.50
Ward, Edmund	THE MAIN CHANCE	Coward, McCann Geoghegan	7.95	6.35
Walker, Irma	THE LUCIFER WINE	Bobbs-Merrill	8.95	6.95
Westlake, Donald E.	ENOUGH	M. Evans	8.95	6.95

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EQMM BOOK DISCOUNT DEPARTMENT

The titles which we are offering this month are listed on the previous page. These books are regular publishers' editions, the very same as those available in bookstores. Only those books which appear can be ordered; we are not in a position to order other books so please do not include any others on the Order Form.

HOW TO ORDER:

1. Fill in the quantities you wish to order of each title.
2. Fill in the "Discount Price" column by multiplying the quantity of each title ordered by the "Discount Price."
3. Add these totals and fill in the sub-total.
4. Fill in the shipping and handling charges by multiplying the total number of books ordered by 60¢ per book.
5. Fill in sales tax if applicable.
6. Fill in the "Grand Total" of your order.

SHIPPING:

1. All orders will be shipped within 24 hours after they are received.
2. Out of stock titles will be shipped within 30 days.
3. All orders not completed in 30 days will be cancelled and money will be refunded.

PAYMENT:

1. Please enclose a check or money order with your order.

For Office Use Only

Check _____

M.O. _____

Other _____

Issue _____

SEND ORDER TO:
BOOK SERVICE
EQMM BOOK DEPT.
P.O. BOX 166
COS COB, CT 06807

ORDER FORM Please send me the following books:

Quantity	Title	Discount Price

SHIPPING AND HANDLING CHARGE
Add 60¢ per book
Connecticut residents add 7% sales tax

SUB-TOTAL	
POSTAGE & HANDLING Books at	
SALES TAX If Applicable	
GRAND TOTAL	

SHIP TO:

Your Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ **Zip** _____

Enclosed is my check or money order for $ _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DETECTIVERSE

TALE SPIN

by MARK GRENIER

You read a plot so queer, evolved
Beneath Dame Agatha's bonnet,
And when you think you've got it solved,
She puts some English on it.

© *1977 by Mark Grenier.*

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

WHODUNIT II

by FREDERICK D. HIGHLAND

If the cinch has been cut and the jockey is dead,
And there's mischief afoot in the stable,
And the trainer suspects that his mounts have been fed
On some oats of the type that disable;
And the hero's been lured to a sinister place
By a gang that is plotting his ruin,
But effects his escape just in time for the race,
Where his entry's considered a shoo-in;
And the tempo picks up as his horse turns the stretch
And the distance from winning's a trifle,
And at last he disarms the nefarious wretch
Who would thwart the result with a rifle;
And with victory won, the action now slows
To a pace that's as slow as an ant's is,
And the reader wants more of such cantering prose,
Then the author, of course, is Dick Francis.

© *1977 by Frederick D. Highland.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF SECOND STORIES

Conrad S. Smith's first story—"Steffi Duna, I Love You!"—appeared in the May 1976 issue of EQMM. His second story is a different kettle of fish—rather, a different can of deviled ham . . .

THE FINAL DECISION

by CONRAD S. SMITH

Martha braced herself for bad news of one kind or another the moment she heard Al's pickup rumbling into the shade of the carport so early. She glanced at the oven clock with bleak amazement. Only 5:15! Tucking back a damp strand of her ginger-and-salt hair, she estimated. Punch-out time: 4:30. Driving time from the Department of Sanitation plant in the city: one hour for a well-adjusted person, 45 minutes for Al. So, incredibly, he'd come straight home after work. Destroying his record of 24 years, she reflected wryly.

No usual beer-brawl at that sleazy bar? Or—her mouth drew into a pale line—no stopover at Leta's apartment either? Stretch, the husband, must be back in town between trucking hauls. Jealousy, though, or even wounded pride had long ceased to register in Martha's resigned blue eyes. Only a detached sort of compassion flickered there for simple trusting Stretch. Al's best friend. Some idea of friendship.

He'd gripe about having to wait for dinner, no doubt. But feeding time at the zoo (as Martha regarded the evening ordeal) couldn't be advanced; she'd only just put in the meat loaf. More troublesome to her was the fact that Al's unusual promptness would prevent her from finishing the typing job now. He couldn't tolerate that when he was home; once he'd even shoved the typewriter to the floor, smashing the carriage.

Yet tonight—somehow—she must finish copying Professor Henderson's lecture on Buddhism; he was picking it up before his first

© 1977 by Conrad S. Smith.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

morning class. She speculated quickly. Later, after Al had gone to bed (or passed out in front of the TV if she were lucky) she'd bring the typewriter out here to the breakfast nook and he wouldn't hear—

The screen door crashed open—Al never just walked into the kitchen—and she winced at the metallic clatter as he tossed his hard-hat and lunchbox on the counter top. That ceramic tile she'd laid with such loving care. He knew it scratched easily.

"You're home early." Her tone was deceptively mild. "Has the vice squad raided The Booby Hatch?"

Irony, if it did not elude Al, baffled him. In lieu of a retort he grunted a curse at the heat and pawed through the refrigerator for a beer. Popping open the can, he drank greedily, trickles of foam running down his bristled jaws.

Martha stooped to pick up the curled flip-top before it got ground into the linoleum; she'd waxed the floor only yesterday. Then she turned abruptly to busy herself with peeling and quartering the potatoes. Over the years she'd found that the gross-bellied thing that Al had become was more bearable if she didn't look directly at him. It spared her the pain of remembering how good-looking he'd been for such a fleeting time in their youth—lean and husky, a ruggedly exciting young gridiron roughneck who could have had any other girl in high school. But she, beautiful idiot child with her high principles, had held out for marriage.

And got it.

"Dinner's not ready yet," she said dully.

"Lying around on your duff all day, huh?"

Were his small eyes boring into her, willing her to face him? Then he went on, with heavy-handed triumph, "I got something to tell you!"

Here it comes, she thought. She gave him one of her sidelong glances. "Well—go ahead."

A taunting attitude was obvious in his delay before replying. He planked himself down on the breakfast-nook bench and tugged off his work boots, bits of caked dirt flaking from them as they clomped to the floor.

Another long swig of beer. Then with a malicious smile he fired his broadside. "There's gonna be no more of your whining about not selling this damn house. Now we got no choice."

She laid down the paring knife slowly. "What do you mean?"

"Didn'tcha hear the mayor on the news today?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Typical of him to be so unaware of her tastes, even after all their years together. During the precious hours each day while he was gone, she strove to recreate her own insulated atmosphere with an all-music FM station. The soothing melodies of Kostelanetz, Percy Faith, Mantovani—that was her daily ticket to a gentle, unreal world where no demoralizing barrage of news intruded. No hijackings, no war threats, no economic gloom, no scandals in Washington.

"No. I was busy."

"Well, for your information, Mayor Dudley really set off a bomb. I heard the announcement on my way to work."

(Al, she knew, listened slavishly to the all-news station on his long commuting drives. Did those endless capsule résumés of disaster, all couched in simple headline terms that he could digest, serve to compensate for his own eventless existence?)

"So?" She waited.

He grinned unpleasantly, wallowing in his moment. "From now on—hear this—all city employees gotta live *within the city limits* or else we get canned."

The color drained from her face. "What do you mean?"

"Can'tcha unnerstan' English? It means we got sixty days to unload this place and move into town, or I'm fired."

She sank down onto the stool, her thoughts tumbling frantically over each other. "But what on earth difference does it make where a man lives? As long as he puts in his forty hours, gets to work on time—"

Al fairly gloated over this old bone of contention. "Yeah, getting to work, how about that? No more freeway hassle for me—and now I can grab an extra hour's shuteye every morning. We'll be living only ten minutes from the plant."

Martha recoiled. There wasn't anything livable within *thirty minutes of the plant.* And the way he'd put that, it held an ominous hint. "Are you saying—you know of a place already?" she breathed apprehensively.

"Yep!" he crowed. "Last time Stretch hit town, he told me their building was gonna have a three-room vacancy real soon."

Stupid gullible Stretch—just making things more convenient for Al and Leta! For her, though, how humiliating. Here in the suburbs the neighbors had no way of finding out, but there—

"You've known about this regulation for weeks and you haven't told me?" she cried.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Naw, I said it wasn't definite until today, didn't I? But all this month at work we been hearing scuttlebutt. Seems the city's always had the rule on its books, but now they're gonna enforce it." He squirmed around on the bench, peeling off his clammy denim shirt. "Soon as I heard for sure, I phoned Leta from work and she said she'd put down a rent deposit for us right away."

Martha gasped. "Without our even seeing the place?"

He shrugged his beefy shoulders, now bare and glistening with sweat. "What's there to see? It's just like their layout, you been there."

Once had been enough. Dark, cramped, shoddy.

"But this is my home, I was raised here!" she cried in panic. "And we have six rooms of furniture, all the things my parents left me!"

He took another slug of beer, then ran a hairy forearm across the foam on his mouth. "So? Then I guess we better throw a garage sale to get rid of all the extra junk, right?"

"But—but why—" The mounting implications were making her incoherent.

"Because you know what a three-room apartment will hold," he snorted.

"No, no, I mean if this regulation has been on the books all along, why are they suddenly enforcing it now?"

He belched reflectively. Al was rarely called on to come up with the reason for anything.

"Taxes, that's what," he proclaimed. "For a long time now everybody that could has been moving out to the suburbs, but the city wants 'em back on its tax rolls again before the whole shebang turns into a slum."

"And that's where you expect us to live?" she quavered.

He grinned once more, this time with smug innocence. "Like I say, we got no choice." His fleshy features reddened at the rare pleasure of getting a rise out of her. She didn't let that happen often enough to suit Al.

"Let them fire you!" she burst out. "You'll receive good severance pay, then you—"

"Are you off your rocker?" he gritted. "You know I got only one more year to go for my half-pay pension. Think I'm gonna toss that in the ashcan *now*?"

She was fumbling desperately. "But there are other jobs, better jobs! You don't always have to drive a dump truck—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But even as she uttered the words, she realized the emptiness behind them. He hadn't the brains or initiative for anything but manual labor. And at 45, with his dissipated ways— Besides, over the years, his union-negotiated pay had risen to the point where he was earning more than many of their white-collar neighbors. Though where so much of his money went before he doled out the household allowance—

"You sure *don't* know what's going on in the world, do you?" He shriveled her with his scorn. "Ever heard of a little thing called unemployment? Once my benefits ran out, how long do you think we could hang onto this house?" His eyes narrowed craftily. "Our house, in case you forgot."

He heaved to his feet, the subject closed as far as he was concerned. Except for a postscript.

"You can start calling real estate guys in the morning. We oughtta get a helluva good price, the way everything's been going up."

He crushed the empty can in his hamhock fist and tossed it jauntily toward the wastebasket. But he missed by several inches; Al had been a tackle, not a basketball player. Unconcerned, he found himself another beer and lumbered out through the dining room. Soon there came a crunch of naugahyde from the living room as he sank into his recliner, and the staccato gunfire of an "F.B.I." re-run began to echo through the house.

For some time Martha remained on the stool, numbed to the point of paralysis. Once Al did earn his pension, she suspected all too well what he planned to do with the house money: he and Stretch were set on buying their own diesel rig, becoming owner-operators on a crosscountry basis. One small consolation, she thought wretchedly—at least she'd be left alone for long periods of time. But where? In a prison-like complex of carbon-copy apartments, with Leta as a neighbor?

What a naive little nitwit she'd been all those years ago to put the house in Al's name too. But at the time her parents died in the air crash, she'd still been young enough to have one illusion left about her floundering marriage. Even though their first two years had been dismal—a series of tacky furnished flats while Al knocked around washing cars, pumping gas, and whatever—now at last he'd got the city job, and they would have this real home to live in. Maybe by actually *sharing* it, he'd begin to feel some responsibility toward their relationship. But her gesture had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proved futile. "Home" to Al was never more than a place to eat and sleep and change his clothes—occasionally.

Anyway, even if she could tell him to get out now, how would she ever manage here alone with no income but the few dollars her typing brought in? There'd be no support money because there could be no divorce—it violated her religious beliefs. *For better or worse, till death do ye part*—that was the way it had to be.

Her eyes passed vacantly over the small radio on the breakfast-nook table, then returned to it with a quick surge of unreasonable hope. Perhaps Al had got the news wrong. He wasn't very bright about things, maybe he'd misunderstood. The ruling might still be just a threat, not definite yet.

But within moments the news station confirmed the worst. Despite the howls of protest inundating City Hall all day, the mayor was holding firm. His taped phrases drummed in on her brain like a death sentence: "*. . . to restore the city's population balance . . . in an effort to reverse the flight to the suburbs . . . last year the Supreme Court upheld a similar residency law when it was challenged by a Philadelphia fireman living in suburban New Jersey . . .*"

She stared unseeingly ahead.

Now a commercial came on, promising that no annoying salesman would high-pressure her while she made the casket selection.

Death—was that the ultimate peace she was seeking? She managed a wry smile. Certainly no annoying salesman would dare pester Al while he picked out the plainest pine box for her. More likely, though, he'd go the even cheaper route and buy a small urn for her ashes. And within a week he'd empty that to include it in the garage sale.

The radio droned on but her ears were closed to it now.

To be strictly fair, how would she choose to handle Al's last rites if he were to die? Go through the hypocritical ritual of a costly funeral? Not that money would be a determining factor—she'd have ample funds from his city life insurance policy. And their own. (Years ago, he'd ordered her to cancel that; but knowing his spendthrift ways and dreading the thought of ever having to give up the house, she'd wanted extra security. So she'd secretly maintained the policy, paying the premiums from her typing money.)

Yes, there'd be plenty of cash in hand for whatever ceremonial display the neighbors might expect. And then—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her eyes glowed rapturously.

—and then there'd be the means of maintaining her cherished home forever! Oh, what with inflation, she might need *some* extra income. But she could devote more time to her typing, and of course there was the potential of the double garage. Once she'd cleared it of Al's camper, Al's motorcycle, his punching bag, his hunting gear, his fishing equipment, she could convert it into a profitable little apartment. Necessity had forced her to become a proficient do-it-yourselfer; in this basically sterile tract house, she'd performed inexpensive miracles with paneling and paint. She could do the same in the garage, transforming it into a haven of warmth and color.

And in this thriving university town she'd soon find a good tenant. Perhaps even Professor Henderson? He was a recent widower and terribly lonely—

So entranced was Martha with her daydream that she remained oblivious even of the urgent message which the radio was now spewing forth: *"... the Food and Drug Administration's warning to shoppers of this area. Several hundred lethally contaminated cans of 'Howard Brothers Deviled Ham' are being recalled due to a virulent pesticide which accidentally entered into the processing of one shipment distributed here. Labels bearing the code XR-74 identify the poisoned cans. Three violent deaths in the last few hours have just been reported and all consumers are warned to check..."*

The words made no dent whatever on Martha's consciousness.

During her flight of fancy the years had slipped from her defeated face. But now, just as suddenly as it had come, her elation faded.

She was a fool! Tantalizing herself like this, trying to create another of her unreal worlds. For all of Al's beer-guzzling, his potbelly and the rest of it, he was sturdy as a bull. He wasn't about to die.

Abruptly the oven's timing buzzer sounded and that snapped her back to the moment. She sighed. Somehow she must force herself to drag on with dinner preparations. In irritation she silenced the radio.

In the living room gunfire raged on, though now it came from the Winchesters and Colts of a ten-year-old episode of "Wanted—Dead or Alive."

With the meat loaf done already, it was too late for starting the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

abandoned potatoes. But while marketing that morning, she'd bought some Instant-Mix potato flakes. Rummaging about on the packed cupboard shelves, her hands passed over stewed tomatoes, rice, deviled ham, succotash—there it was, way in the back.

Al wolfed down his food as always, eyes transfixed on the TV set through the living-room archway. Some game show called "The Battle of Wits" was now challenging her husband's intellect, Martha noted abstractedly, with its witty contestants seeing how many cream pies they could hurl at each other before a gong rang.

He didn't notice—nor would he care, she thought desolately—that she didn't touch her meal. Her throat was too dry, too constricted by the despair welling up inside her.

Through the clear plastic tablecloth that Al's eating habits necessitated, she could see the gleaming walnut of her mother's dining-room table. *A garage sale to get rid of the extra junk.* Doomed, too, were her hundreds of books lining the walls of the extra bedroom, her office-hideaway. What would they go for at the garage sale? Ten cents each for paperbacks, a quarter for hardbacks. Or might some gimlet-eyed dealer offer $10 for the lot?

A knot of pain clawed at her stomach and quiet tears brimmed down onto her plate.

In the distance the university chapel clock chimed midnight.

She yearned for the temporary escape of sleep, but would it ever come for her tonight? Her brain was in such turmoil.

At moments like this—ever since the appalling disillusionment of her wedding night—Martha had found herself skeptically reassessing that set of values so deeply ingrained in her. Moral principles that seemingly had led only to a lifetime of unhappiness.

Then suddenly she thought of Professor Henderson's lecture, the typing unfinished. The lecture stressed the Buddhists' dedication to *sila*, the religion's code of moral conduct. Their adherence to it was fanatical, often at the risk of their own survival. As an example, he had cited the deadly scourge of rabies running rampant in the Eastern countries; but even in combating that, a Buddhist's *sila* will prevent him from exterminating the rabid dogs that carry the disease. For in its strictest interpretation, *sila* forbids the killing of any living creature, from microbe to man.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sila struck a particularly sympathetic chord in Martha. She too had always suffered the strongest aversion to snuffing out the life of any creature—even common garden enemies like the snails which feasted on her rosebushes. For Martha an early-morning walk across the dewy lawn was more like a tiptoed dance to avoid crushing the exasperating little gluttons. No matter what damage they caused, their fate was not hers to decide.

Not that she'd ever considered this squeamish inhibition to be any part of her religion; it was a phobia with her and at times a vexing one. But now she felt almost uplifted to discover that her seemingly unreasonable antipathy to killing anything was actually a holy precept revered by millions.

But then her mouth tightened. Another of her lofty principles! And would the time come when she'd regret letting *this* one rule her actions? Or—a curious chill ran through her—had that time already come? Tonight, watching a murder film on TV, a vague, terrifying suggestion had become implanted in her subconscious—a monstrous notion she had cast from her mind at once before it might take root.

Still, if it weren't for her aversion, her *sila*—

She sat bolt upright in bed, shaking with cold horror. This was morbid hysteria! No, far worse than that—madness—and it must stop. Not, of course, that this suppressed urge could even remotely become reality. If only he knew, Al should thank God for those principles that bound her.

The chapel clock chimed three times.

Three o'clock? Where had the hours gone? Despite everything, she must have dozed off from nervous exhaustion. But now she was wildly, electrically awake. How could she ever lie here in the dark for three more hours until the alarm went off?

The unfinished typing job. Now was the perfect time for that. The routine monotony of the task might help to ward off the mental pressures crowding in on her. She fumbled around on the moonlight-dappled bed for her robe and crept out to the hall, closing the door behind her.

In the spare room she determinedly kept her eyes from the wall of books, vowing not to let her emotions give way again. But a cool summer night's breeze was wafting through the open window, and outside the moon shone down with ice-blue brightness on her beloved garden. The orderly paths, the meticulous hedges—

Her eyes filmed over.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Biting her lip to hold back the tears, she picked up the typewriter and the various necessary papers, carried them out to the breakfast nook, then retraced her steps to close off the intervening doors.

Back in the kitchen she took a deep steadying breath. Mechanical duties one by one, that was the only answer. First, start the coffee. And while it was brewing, get the fixing of Al's lunch out of the way. Sandwiches to be made. What did she have on hand? The cold meat loaf, of course, but since he'd had that last night, he might expect a little variety today. Then she remembered buying a can of deviled ham.

She reached for it.

But she hesitated. That would mean having the warmed-over meat loaf for dinner tonight and Al might not go for that, much as she knew he liked it. Better to use it up for his lunch. She took the covered baking dish from the refrigerator.

After wrapping the sandwiches in waxed paper, she laid them on the countertop along with a big wedge of cake and a banana. She couldn't pack the lunchbox yet—in last night's confusion she'd forgotten to wash and air it. Wrinkling her nose at the dank odor, she cleaned out yesterday's mess and put the box and Thermos to soak in hot sudsy water.

Still moving with a robot-like precision, she poured a cup of coffee and sat in the breakfast nook, sipping the coffee before tackling her work. She was conscious of neither its aroma nor its flavor, but needed its warmth. Despite her resolve, in no way could she free herself of the oppressive cloud that enveloped her. With a leaden heart she envisioned the grim task looming ahead this morning: how would she *ever* summon the courage to lift up the telephone and call a real estate agent?

A last feeble hope drew her to the radio once more. Could the mayor possibly have been forced to yield to the protests after all? So many of those affected hadn't *moved* to the suburbs, they'd always lived here. Why should they be penalized? Maybe—

She gripped her cup with shaking fingers, waiting for the announcer to get to the local news. But by the time she finished a second cup of coffee, he was starting to repeat the national items and there'd been no mention whatever of the city's ruling. She sagged back, her eyes becoming vacant windows again. Already it was "yesterday's news." Except for those whose lives were crushed by it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With an air of utter finality she reached forward to snap off the switch. But then the announcer's voice suddenly became urgent to such a degree that it captured her attention:

"We interrupt to bring you this special emergency bulletin. During the night two more local deaths have resulted from poisoned cans of 'Howard Brothers Deviled Ham.' This brings to five the number of fatalities caused by the lethal pesticide, first discovered in the product early last evening—"

Martha's face blanched. That tin of ham—what was the brand name? She jumped up to fling open the cupboard, then drew in her breath raggedly. Yes—*Howard Brothers*! And what was the announcer repeating about the label? *XR-74*.

As she spied the fatal identification, she gave a terrified little cry. Reacting entirely by instinct to the danger, she held the can out at arm's length almost as though it were a writhing reptile and dropped it into the wastebasket with a gasp of relief. She'd never scorn the radio news again.

For some minutes she sat hunched over another cup of coffee, shaken by the incident and trying to steady her fingers enough to begin work. But a glance out the window urged her on. Soon dawn would turn her ice-blue garden to monotone gray, and soon Al's alarm clock would go off. She must get on with the job.

But first, as always before typing each page of the professor's handwritten text, she'd have to read through it carefully. His many crossouts and insertions required numerous clarifying notations for herself in the margins. Now where had she left off? Oh, yes, about the rabid dogs—

As she read, a curiously changing pattern of expressions began to transform her features. Disbelief at first, followed by a frown of intense concentration as she reread a certain passage. Then gradually it was a look of transcendent peace that took possession of her. Her eyes glowed with a kind of luminous revelation, almost as though she'd passed through some mysterious portal which the professor's words had opened for her. She was no longer quite of this world.

Very deliberately her strange gaze settled on the meat-loaf sandwiches before drifting to the wastebasket. It lingered there for a long moment.

Then her eyes were drawn to the closed door leading into the dining room, seeming to penetrate it with the intensity of a laser beam—through to the hall door, and through that to the bedroom

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

door behind which her husband slept.

With the oddest of little smiles curving her lips, she stood up and disconnected the radio, took it out to the broom closet, and hid it far back in the depths. Al always listened to the news during breakfast, but this morning he'd be disappointed to hear that the set was being repaired.

Now from the tool box on the closet shelf she took a pair of pliers and glided noiselessly out through the back door to the carport. In the pickup truck it took her only a moment to find the radio wires. She snipped them deftly, then moved back into the kitchen, still barely making a sound. She replaced the pliers and went over to the wrapped sandwiches, smiling down at them.

It was by now a smile of complete serenity.

As she'd reasoned earlier, Al did indeed relish her meat loaf. Still, her other thought had been valid as well: today he might prefer a change. Perhaps some deviled ham sandwiches.

But she mustn't make the decision. She would give him his choice. She'd prepare the deviled ham sandwiches and pack them in his lunchbox along with the meat loaf. Then when lunchtime came, he could take his pick.

She reached down into the wastebasket.

A few minutes later the packed lunchbox, Al's Thermos, and his hard-hat were neatly lined up on the counter top near the back door. Pale golden sunlight flooded Martha's beloved kitchen as she settled herself at the typewriter. Her fingers, sure and steady now, poised themselves over the keys and then she started to copy the professor's text:

"In certain Buddhist countries such as Thailand, however, the more progressive practitioners of the religion are wise enough to realize that their rabid dogs should be destroyed for the good of all concerned. But to accommodate *sila*—their aversion to killing—they leave the final decision to the dog. The animal is offered two pieces of meat, one of which is soaked with poison. If the dog happens to choose the poisoned piece, it is his mistortune. *The master is relieved of all moral guilt.*"

Another comforting thought drifted through her mind. Al was such a glutton.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a detective *NOVELET* by
HUGH PENTECOST

Stories about the professional theater are irresistible—especially when the cast includes a beautiful, ageless, and glamorous star like Shawn Daly. Surrounding her in the summer stock production at Jason's Barn Theater in Connecticut are the playwright, the producer, the director, the press agent, the leading man, the other actors, the stage crew, and the star's stand-in. Add Rachmaninoff's Concerto in C Minor and—MURDER . . .

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

by HUGH PENTECOST

Everyone who's been inside a movie theater in the last fifteen years knows Shawn Daly. There have only been a few actresses in the field who have had that extra-special something that is real glamor: Garbo, Dietrich, the endlessly amazing Joan Crawford—and Shawn Daly. Star is the word for them.

Shawn had started young. She was in her early thirties, Dick Loring supposed. He had only come to know Shawn during the last five days of rehearsal, but he had actually met her briefly nearly a month ago at a party Murray Styles had given in New York to announce the fact that she was going to star in the tryout of his play at Jason's Barn in Connecticut.

As Jason's press representative Dick had gone to town to meet the star. He'd always wondered if her lovely red hair was natural. Of course it would have been tinted for camera work, but what about the rest of the time? When he finally met her at Styles's, he couldn't be sure. He peered good-naturedly at it and grinned at her.

"I have to confess I've been in love with you since I was fifteen years old," he told her.

She gave him a wry smile. "I usually resent that," she said. The

Copyright 1955 by McCall Corporation; originally titled "Murder in C Minor."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

low, exciting voice hadn't been manufactured by any sound equipment; it was real. "That speech comes mostly from unattractive bores who are old enough to be my father. Not flattering."

She gave Dick an appraising look. "I would place you at about thirty, Mr. Loring. I started in pictures when I was eighteen. I've just finished my fifteenth year in Hollywood. Does that satisfy your unspoken curiosity?"

Her pale, white skin seemed almost transparent. The faint blue shadows around her eyes might be subtle make-up, or they might be real.

"I still say I was in love with you when I was fifteen," Dick said.

Styles's party was no place for an interview. You couldn't keep Shawn Daly to yourself at any large gathering. She told him she had some clipping books and a résumé of her career at her hotel. If he'd stop by in a couple of hours she'd leave them for him at the desk.

Dick felt as though he'd been whisked in and out of a magic world for a brief moment. He didn't want to talk to anyone else. About an hour later he saw her saying goodbye and go down the hall to the room where the women had left their wraps.

He knew he had to hear that magic voice again on some pretext or other, so after a moment or two he wandered out into the hall himself. He saw her standing with her back to him talking to someone in the room beyond. She was wearing a fabulous mink coat, the red hair shimmering above its collar. Then she turned.

The face was a gargoyle's face, a horrible caricature of the one he'd just been looking at. It was like a physical blow to Dick. The nose was big, the mouth a red slash, the eyes narrowed and suspicious. Of course it wasn't Shawn—the same figure, the same red hair, but not Shawn.

Then Shawn came out of the room beyond, wearing an identical mink coat. She slipped her arm through the gargoyle's—the gargoyle who was a twin in figure, in coloring, in dress. Dick stared like a country yokel. Shawn realized what had happened.

"My friend and secretary, Emily Vardon—Mr. Loring, who's Phil Jason's press representative," she said, introducing them.

The gargoyle's red slash of a mouth drew down in a bitter smile. "Seen a ghost, Mr. Loring?"

"Emily used to be my stand-in when I first went into pictures,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shawn said. "Don't forget to stop at the hotel for the press clippings, Mr. Loring." And she and the gargoyle went off.

There was excitement at Jason's Barn Theater when it was finally settled that Shawn Daly was to star there in Murray Styles's new play. Back from his trip to New York, Dick Loring was sitting on the terrace outside the actors' residence with Phil Jason and Roy Chandler, who was to direct the play.

Jason, mild-mannered, sandy-haired, was staring happily down across the stretch of lawn toward the theater. His faint smile suggested he was having a vision of customers hanging from the rafters during the week that Shawn played there.

Chandler, a dark, wiry man whose extraordinary energy made everything he said sound angry, was asking about Shawn. "What's she like? I hear she can be terrible when she's working."

"She's a dream," Dick said, remembering. "Didn't you or Phil ever meet her when you worked in Hollywood?"

Chandler snorted. "I was a stunt man in Westerns. Phil was second assistant to a second-assistant cameraman. Characters like us don't get to know the Shawn Dalys of this world."

"Well, you can do a little whipcracking now," Dick said.

They were joined then by Dr. Harlow Robinson, a blond, cheery young man whose house and office were just a few hundred yards up the main street.

"Patient will live," he said, perching on the terrace rail, his little black bag beside him.

"Who's sick?" Dick asked him.

"Apprentice stepped on a rusty nail," Robinson said. "Tetanus shot required." He grinned at Dick. "Well?"

"Well what?"

"Give, man! Haven't you just been in the presence of the great lady?"

"Shawn Daly?"

"Well, who else? Are the feet made of clay, or is she real?"

"Very real," Dick said.

"I used to stand outside Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood just to watch her go into a preview."

"You lived in Hollywood?" Dick asked.

"Interned there," Robinson said. "Unfortunately La Daly never had an accident."

"Unfortunately?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robinson grinned. "Only way I'd have gotten to meet her. I was riding the ambulance in those days."

"Well, if you'll give me free medical care for the rest of my life I promise to introduce you when she gets here," Dick said.

"Maybe it's better to worship from afar," Robinson said. "I have so few illusions left."

"She won't spoil your illusions," Dick said. "She's everything you imagined."

Robinson glanced at Phil Jason. "What's with him?"

"The pupils of his eyes have turned into little dollar signs," Chandler grunted. "All I hope is she doesn't try to play the great lady. We have a show to get on."

Robinson picked up his bag. "Well, back to the salt mines. I may take you up on that free medical care, Loring. I doubt if I can resist the chance to meet the lady face to face."

A week later Shawn arrived, accompanied by the gargoyle and by a particularly obnoxious young actor named Watson Craig who seemed to be a protégé of Shawn's. She always insisted, over protests this time from Jason and Murray Styles, on his being in her casts. When Dick asked her about it, she laughed it off.

"What's the use of being a big shot if you can't throw your weight around a little?"

Craig was tall, a little too good-looking, a little too broad-shouldered, and in Dick's opinion, altogether insufferable. When Dick tried to get something from him for publicity, it turned out he'd had almost no experience except a little television work on the coast.

"Miss Daly made such a point of your being in the cast," Dick said, "I thought perhaps—"

Craig had interrupted him with a knowing smile. "I go with Shawn," he said. Dick wondered, angrily, how much the genuine emerald cuff links and the gold cigarette case had cost Shawn. Well, if she wanted to be interested in a young man it was none of his business. But Mr. Watson Craig was a fact.

Rehearsals had gone well—until today. Everyone had wondered just what Shawn would be like to work with in a legitimate play after all her years in pictures. It was soon quite clear that she was a real pro, hard-working, considerate—until today.

Mr. Watson Craig was something else again. He was not a good actor, and he seemed to be the only person connected with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

production who didn't know it. Shawn *must* know, Dick thought, though she gave no sign of it.

Then today, just as everyone was getting easy, Shawn had blown up—but good. From the start of rehearsal she had complained about the script, complained about the direction, and flown into a fury when Roy Chandler, the director, had been sharply critical of Watson Craig. When the afternoon rehearsal ended, cast and crew went quietly off to their quarters, nerves on edge.

Dick had found himself standing alone in front of the theater with Shawn, not knowing what to say, a little sick with the disillusionment the day had brought. Suddenly he felt her hand, cool and firm, slip into his. He looked down at her, startled.

"I behaved like a heel today, didn't I?" she said.

He grinned at her. "You did."

"Watson Craig is a rotten actor, isn't he?"

"He is."

She drew a deep breath. "Well, tomorrow is another day—to coin a phrase. Dick, I think I'd like to go back into the theater and be by myself a while. I have a little heavy thinking to do."

He'd gone back in with her, through the stage door. There was a modern wrought-iron armchair on the stage, with a seat and back of bright orange canvas. She sat down in it.

"Want a little music?" he asked.

She nodded and he went to the amplifier offstage and put a record on the turntable. It happened to be the Rachmaninoff Concerto in C Minor. When he came out onstage again, Shawn had covered her face with her hand. She might have been asleep. He tiptoed off without saying a word to her. . .

Half an hour later he was sitting on the stone terrace outside the actors' residence, sipping an iced coffee, when he heard the scream from the direction of the theater—the sheer essence of terror. As he jumped up from his chair Dick saw the girl running up the path from the theater, straight black hair streaming out behind her.

Her name was Alicia something-or-other and she was one of Jason's teen-aged apprentices, working on the technical crew. Dick vaulted the terrace rail and started down the path to meet her. When she saw him coming, the strength seemed to leave her and she dropped down on her knees in the path, sobbing.

"What is it?" Dick asked her sharply.

"Miss Daly!" she whispered.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dick ran down the path toward the barn. Before he got there he could hear the crazy jabbering of the amplifier inside the theater. The pickup had stuck in one of the grooves of the record and was playing the same few notes over and over—an idiot pianist.

At the door of the theater he stopped, frozen. He could see the figure on the stage—the lovely, slim figure with the bright red hair—still sitting in the modern armchair on the stage. She was slumped a little to one side, her hand still shielding her face. An amber spot from the first bar circled the chair and its occupant in a single shaft of light. The record player pounded out its half dozen notes, over and over.

Then the girl, Alicia, was behind Dick, flooding him with hysteria. "—the icepick from the backstage cooler—right through the chair—up to the hilt—right into her—you can only see the handle—"

Then the figure in the chair moved. She wasn't dead. The hand dropped away from her face and Dick heard his breath making a choking sound in his throat. He felt a surge of relief and was ashamed of it.

It wasn't Shawn sitting there in the chair. It was the gargoyle—Emily Vardon.

Dick sent Alicia to the box-office phone to call a doctor. He went up on the stage, stopping first to turn off the stuck record player. The sudden silence was unearthly. He walked around behind the chair and saw that Alicia had not exaggerated—saw and was afraid he was going to be sick.

Then he went around to the front and knelt, looking up at Emily Vardon's face. There was a faint trickle of bloody foam from one corner of her mouth. Her breathing was tortured.

"Miss Vardon! It's Dick Loring. Just hold on. We've sent for help."

There was a chance she could hear.

No one had to tell Dick that he was in the presence of attempted murder. He knew people would hear the news in a moment and come running. They should be kept from messing around on stage. So Dick went backstage and bolted the stage door and the back door to the dressing rooms.

Dr. Harlow Robinson hurried in, brisk, professional, almost able to disguise his concern.

"How did it happen?" Robinson bent down and picked up a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soiled rag from the stage. Fingerprints, Dick thought, vaguely. "Take hold of her shoulders from the front and hold her steady."

"But, Doctor, I—"

"Do as I tell you."

Dick took Emily Vardon's shoulders in his hands, his face turned away. He could feel her shudder as the doctor, with an expert movement, pulled the icepick out of the wound.

"Not much external bleeding," Robinson said matter-of-factly. "Shock. You called the police? This is no accident."

"We didn't think of anything but getting help for her," Dick said.

Where was Shawn?

A hypodermic of adrenalin and morphine to counteract shock and internal bleeding. Harlow Robinson thought the lung might be punctured. A foam rubber mat from the bench in the dressing room; the gargoyle stretched out on the mat, feet elevated; a blanket to keep her warm.

The competent young doctor now wanted to phone for an ambulance and notify the police. Dick walked out to the lobby with him, closing the theater doors behind him. People were coming—people with strained faces, brimming with questions. Jason, Styles, Chandler, and last of all, Watson Craig. Dick answered questions. Dr. Robinson came back from the box office.

"I got the State Police. I'll wait inside with my patient until the ambulance comes."

Where was Shawn?

"She could have been mistaken for Shawn from behind," Watson Craig said. "Where is Shawn?"

"Looks like the Vardon woman stood in for Shawn Daly once too often," Phil Jason said. "You think perhaps it *was* meant for Shawn?"

Before Dick could answer, the theater doors opened again and Dr. Robinson stood there, his face white.

"Who went into the theater while I was phoning?" he asked.

"No one. I was standing here by the door the whole time," Dick said.

"Who came out?"

"No one."

"Someone was there."

Dick, Jason, Craig, and Chandler followed the doctor back into the theater. Emily Vardon still lay on the foam rubber mat,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrapped in a blanket. Dr. Robinson walked on the stage without speaking. Dick was the first to see what had happened.

Someone, with savage brutality, had smashed in Emily Vardon's head with a heavy weapon. This second attack, made while they were all only a few yards away, had removed all doubt as to whether she would live or die.

The back doors were still bolted on the inside as Dick had left them. No one could have gone out that way and left the doors bolted on the inside. The four people who could have had any past contact with Shawn in Hollywood were all accounted for when Emily Vardon's head had been smashed in. Dr. Robinson had been talking on the box-office phone in plain view; Craig, Chandler, and Phil Jason had been talking to Dick in the lobby. No one else had come in or gone out through the front doors.

There was only one answer. The killer was still in the theater, hiding.

Only he wasn't. A ten-minute search settled that.

No way out. That was a fact. Yet the killer was gone. That was also a fact. They couldn't both be facts—and yet they were.

Then as the five men stood around the body on the stage, staring at each other in bewildered silence, they all heard someone approaching the stage door, cheerfully whistling the Concerto in C Minor. The door was tried. The whistling stopped.

Jason, wiping the sweat from his forehead, walked over to the door and slid back the bolt. Shawn stood outside, framed in the light from the setting sun.

"Hi, Jason! Closing up for the night already?"

The change in her was extraordinary, Dick saw. The tensions of the day had disappeared from her face. She looked ten years younger. She looked wonderful. She saw Dick and walked quickly past Jason through the masking flats and onto the stage.

"I've got wonderful news for you, Richard, my friend!" she said, her eyes bright and happy.

Only then did she see the others—see the body of her friend and secretary. She stopped where she was, arms stiff at her side, staring at the dead woman. The new buoyancy was wiped off her face like writing from a slate. She began to sway.

It was Dick who reached her and put his arm firmly around her shoulders.

The police came then and got facts—endless, unnecessary facts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it seemed to Dick. Where were you born and when? Where was the deceased born and when? Your legal residence—on and on.

Who would want to kill Emily Vardon? It became quite clear that no one would—so said Shawn and a highly jittery Watson Craig. Emily Vardon, for seventeen years, had had no friends, no life of her own. She had lived and breathed in the service of Shawn; a thoughtful, considerate, loyal friend. Without a life of her own, how could she have such an enemy?

What was Emily doing in the theater? This was pretty obvious, Shawn thought. When Shawn had failed to come up to the actors' residence with the rest of the company, Emily had become anxious about her and come looking for her.

"She loved music. When she didn't find me in the theater she must have sat down in that chair on the stage to listen to the concerto." Shawn's fingers tightened around Dick's. "It was one of her favorites."

The murderer, coming into the theater probably through one of the back doors, had seen Emily from behind, sitting in the orange-backed chair, and thought it was Shawn.

"Who hated you enough, Miss Daly, to—?"

No one specific. No open enemies. But a crackpot, perhaps, some lovesick mental case who imagined rejection?

"You can't help us with any definite suggestions?" Captain Taylor asked.

Shawn hesitated, and Dick was suddenly aware of Watson Craig blotting at a film of sweat on his forehead. But Craig had been in the lobby all the time that Dr. Robinson was on the phone. He couldn't have made the second attack on Emily and pulled a disappearing act.

"No one," Shawn said in a flat voice. Her fingers relaxed. Her hand dropped limply into her lap.

"You left the theater, Miss Daly," Taylor said. "Went somewhere, leaving that record playing. Where?"

"I walked up the main street to the Inn. I wanted to make a phone call to Hollywood. There isn't much privacy at the actors' residence. You can easily check. I was probably talking on the phone when—when this happened."

"All this detail is a waste of time," Dick heard himself saying. "When you find out how the guy pulled his disappearing act, you'll probably find out who it is."

Taylor tried. Jason, his set designer, his stage manager, were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

questioned. Were there any trap doors, any forgotten nailed-up exits, any way out over the roof? There were not. Positively not.

So they were back where they had started. The impossible had happened. Emily Vardon was dead, struck down from behind, probably mistaken for Shawn. But she was not dead the first time. She might have recovered and been able to speak a name. So she was attacked a second time by an invisible hand that had carried away the weapon used to strike her down.

The disappearance was impossible but complete.

And here was Shawn, the intended victim, not knowing which face she looked into might be the face of a person who wanted her dead.

"We have tonight and tomorrow," Jason was saying in a flat voice. "If we lose them, we have no show. Of course it's up to you, Captain."

The State Trooper captain kept snapping shut and unsnapping the flap of his gun holster. He never took his eyes off Shawn Daly who sat back of Jason's desk, the green shaded droplight doing a merciless job of revealing the ravages of fear and fatigue on her lovely face.

"Miss Daly has to make part of the decision," Captain Taylor said.

Shawn smiled, very faintly. "The show must go on!" she said.

"Why?" Dick Loring heard himself ask sharply. "I've heard people in show business say that all my life. But why? No one should ask Miss Daly to go on working tonight and tomorrow in view of what's happened. It isn't safe. What difference does it make whether a lot of tourists get to see Shawn Daly in a new play the day after tomorrow? They'll live without it."

Phil Jason gave Dick a pained look. "But will the rest of us?" he asked. He tried to make it sound light, but it didn't come off. He had a week's sell-out business in the bank that he'd have to refund.

"It seems to me the question of safety is the main thing," Murray Styles said.

Styles, the author, was a pretty decent fellow Dick thought. He had a lot at stake too. This was his first play and a good one. With Shawn Daly starring, it should go on to a resounding Broadway success. But Styles was thinking of Shawn.

Shawn was looking steadily at the captain. The shadows under

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her eyes looked as though they'd been drawn there with a blue pencil. "Would I be any safer anywhere else?" she asked. "You could lock me up in your jail, Captain, and all he has to do is bide his time and wait till I come out. There isn't any safe place for me until he's caught. I might just as well be working."

"You'll just be setting yourself up as a clay pigeon," Dick said.

The dark, violet eyes turned on him and he felt his knees shake. He'd known her these five days, but it seemed to him it had been all his life and that he'd been in love with her all that time. It was having seen and adored her on the screen for years; it was as though he knew her better than anyone else.

"I won't be safe, Dick, until he reveals himself. Maybe this is the best way. Maybe he'll act quickly and we'll get it over with."

"Naturally we won't let you out of our sight," Captain Taylor tried to reassure her.

"If it's up to me," Shawn said, "I say let's get on with it. It will be easier than just sitting somewhere waiting."

"Good girl," Jason said, implying that the nice green money in the bank was there to stay.

Captain Taylor turned to Dick. "Can you take care of those reporters, Loring? That's your job, isn't it? Press relations."

"What do I tell them?"

"Just the facts. No theorizing."

Dick laughed mirthlessly. "What are the facts, Captain?" He made one last try with Shawn. "I think you ought to have Doc Robinson give you an okay before you go back to work."

"Thanks, Dick, but there's nothing wrong with me that getting my mind off this won't cure," Shawn said. She got up from the chair behind Jason's desk. "Well, let's get the show on the road, Mr. Jason."

The rest of the cast and the crew of Jason's Barn Theater were waiting onstage for a decision, Dick knew. And outside the office were a dozen reporters clamoring for the story. The editor of the local newspaper had been quick to spread the word to the surrounding towns and cities. Shawn Daly was big news anywhere.

"Don't make it too lurid, Dick," Jason said, as he was leaving. "Don't want to scare the customers away."

"I don't care a hoot for your customers," Dick said.

Shawn stopped and put a cool hand on Dick's. "Thanks for being concerned, Dick," she said. "Really, it might be better this way."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, whatever happens," he said dryly, "you're the prettiest clay pigeon I ever saw."

Dick stuck his head out the office door and called to the reporters who were waiting. "Give me five minutes, boys and girls, and I'll have a statement for you."

There were groans and boos. Dick slammed the door shut and locked it. He wanted a few minutes to get his own thinking squared away. Shawn was in danger, and the answer to how she could be made safe was right in front of their noses—if they could only see it.

The show must go on, Shawn had said. Why? Well, why not? Where else would she be safe? Young Dr. Robinson, somehow a little less brisk and businesslike than when Dick first saw him, had "a little something" that would counteract the shock from which Shawn must be suffering but might not feel at the moment. A white pill, a glass of water—and back to work.

And the theater would be dark, except for the bright lights that would make Shawn clearly, sharply visible on stage. And the murderer would be watching, and calculating, and perhaps preparing to make sure that this time he got "the prettiest clay pigeon" Dick had ever seen.

Those were the facts Dick had for the waiting members of the press. . .

Now the press was gone, and Dick had slipped down the darkened side aisle that led backstage. The first act of the dress rehearsal was under way, involving some of the secondary characters in the opening scene. Murray Styles had built up an entrance for his star.

Backstage, people whispered and moved about softly on rubber-soled feet—the stage manager, the prop girls, a boy at the sound equipment. Outside the curtained doorway of Shawn's dressing room Dick knocked softly.

"Come in." Her voice sounded tense. She had turned around on the stool facing her mirror and her eyes were wide, frightened. "Oh, Dick! It's you. I—"

"Take it easy," he said. "They have a State Trooper at each door. There's no one here who doesn't belong. I'll be in the wings and I won't let you out of my sight."

"Suppose—suppose he doesn't care whether or not he's caught this time—as long as I—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He's got to get *at* you, Shawn, and he's not going to. Captain Taylor may not be very bright, but he knows routine. He even searched the parking-lot kid for a gun. Nobody's going to take a pot shot at you—you can count on that. How do you feel?"

She tried a smile. "I took a little white pill, remember?"

"Is it doing anything for you?"

"I don't feel anything but—but plain, ordinary panic!"

Dick came close to her. "Remember I told you I've been in love with you since I was fifteen?"

"I remember."

"I'm still in love with you. I'm not going to let anything happen to you."

"Dick, I—"

"What was the 'wonderful news' you had to tell me when you came back from making your phone call?"

She was going to speak but a discreet knock came at the door. "Your entrance cue coming up, Miss Daly," the stage manager whispered. "Will you take your place, please?"

"Thank you." Shawn reached out her hand. "I'll tell you later, Dick."

He walked out into the wings with her and, watching her, saw that she was trembling as she waited for her cue to go on. Karl Leonard, an actor who was in the scene with her, whispered "Good luck." But little rivers of sweat were running down his face.

A comedy played without an audience always sounds a little flat. A comedy played under the present circumstances was almost unbearable. But Shawn and Karl Leonard were acting their scene brightly—high and brittle.

Dick moved into the prompter's booth and looked out through the peephole at the house. The red point of a cigarette moved up and down the right aisle. That would be Chandler, the director, pacing—always pacing. At the back of the house a cigarette lighter flared and Dick got a momentary glimpse of Captain Taylor's grim, bony face. Then he almost shouted a warning. He had looked up at the catwalk and had seen a figure there, hunched over, moving stealthily.

As the urge to cry out mounted in Dick's throat he suddenly realized it was the electrician, quietly adjusting spotlights, reflectors, and gelatins.

"Let's hold it a minute," Chandler called out from the audience.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dick saw him walk down to the footlights. "I'm sorry, Shawn—Karl. I know the—uh—circumstances are difficult. But you're just rattling through this scene. If you don't *play* it there isn't much point. We don't need a line rehearsal."

"Sorry," Leonard said.

"It's my fault," Shawn said quickly. "My knees are shaking so, I guess I'm just pounding at the lines to stay in one piece."

Captain Taylor came hurrying up the aisle. "Anything wrong, Miss Daly? See anything? Hear anything?"

"Goblins!" Shawn said sharply. "I'm sorry, Captain, but it's not the easiest thing, knowing that any minute—"

"Nothing's going to happen to you in this theater, Miss Daly. I promise you. We've got everyone covered. No one can sneak into the place. You're quite safe, I assure you."

"Of course you're right," Shawn said. "If you want us to go back, Mr. Chandler, I'll try—"

"If you wouldn't mind—back to Karl's entrance—"

"Sure," Leonard said, and started for the stage-left entrance.

"Just a minute." The voice came from near the rear of the house. Through the prompter's peephole Dick saw Dr. Robinson coming up the aisle, carrying his little black bag. "The shock has been greater than you realize, Miss Daly. I think I can give you something that will stop the shakes—if you insist on going on with this."

Dick walked out onto the stage. Some inner instinct was screaming at him that this was all wrong.

"You shouldn't go on with it!" he said, talking out into the darkness where Jason and Styles and the others were sitting. "It's all very well for the Captain to tell Shawn that everything's covered. Sure he's got men at all the doors and he's searched everyone. But the man we want doesn't use doors to come and go. Oh, I know that sounds crazy, but he doesn't. How can you assure her of anything, Taylor?"

Shawn came over to him. "Dick, I want to go on," she said. "The run-through is important, even if we're no good. We open day after tomorrow."

"If you'll just come back into your dressing room a minute," Dr. Robinson said. "A small injection—it'll work in minutes."

"This way, Doctor," Shawn said.

Dick, his instinct still protesting, followed Shawn and the doctor into her dressing room.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Just roll up your left sleeve, Miss Daly," Robinson said. He put his bag down on the dressing table and opened it. He took out a hypodermic needle, a piece of gauze wrapped around it. Dick saw that the cylinder was half filled with a pale yellow liquid.

"Now clench your fist tight, Miss Daly. Hold your arm out perfectly straight—a little alcohol—" Dr. Robinson rubbed her arm with a piece of alcohol-soaked cotton.

"Just a minute," Dick said sharply. "You had that hypodermic all ready, Doctor."

"Of course, I had a feeling we might need it," Robinson said. With his left hand he squeezed Shawn's arm. The right brought the needle close.

Something was happening to Dick—like the running of a movie film at high speed across his memory. Without thinking, he lunged forward and knocked the hypodermic out of Robinson's hand.

"Taylor!" he shouted at the top of his lungs.

Robinson, every ounce of blood drained from his face, stared at Dick for an instant and then his face began to dissolve into something horrible, like a melting wax figure. Dick could hear people running from the stage. Robinson looked around like an animal in a trap, and then he dove at Dick, fists flailing.

Dick stumbled backward, tripped over the dressing-table bench, and went down with Robinson on top of him. Fingers closed on his throat—fingers as strong as iron claws.

Then as suddenly as it had begun, it ended. The fingers loosened. Robinson was jerked back, and Dick saw Taylor holding him up like a sawdust doll.

"What is this?"

Dick scrambled up. It had all come clear.

"He's the one, Taylor. I don't know why, but I know how! We've been trying to figure how the murderer got out of the theater. He didn't. He was right there talking to us. There was only one person alone with Emily Vardon that second time—the doctor, who went in to 'sit with his patient.'

"He killed her when he went back in there. He carried the weapon away in that black bag of his. What was it, Robinson, a stage carpenter's hammer? You had everything covered, Taylor, except that the murderer could get to Shawn any time he chose. Doctor's orders!

"I don't know what's in that hypodermic, but he had it ready. It

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would work in minutes, he said. I'll bet a thousand to one that Shawn would have been dead in minutes and our little doctor here would have pronounced it heart failure, a logical outcome of the day's tensions."

Suddenly Shawn was clinging to Dick's arm. "But *why*?" she asked in a shocked voice. "I never laid eyes on the man in my life before."

Robinson made a tremendous effort to free himself, his eyes blazing, but Taylor was a vise.

"You lie," he shouted at Shawn. "You lie, you lie! For five years you've tortured me. You ruined my practice in Hollywood. You drove me away from my family and friends. For five years I've paid you, and paid you, and paid you!

"You know me all right. I saw you go to the Hollywood post office—I saw you pick up the mail from that special box. Wasn't it enough for you to be rich and popular? Did you have to wreck other people's lives? Didn't you have enough power without that? I let a poor sick girl have narcotics and she killed herself with them. It was a mistake. Why did you have to make something of it? You didn't need anything you could get from me."

Shawn's voice was a whisper. "I don't know what he's talking about."

"Blackmailer!" Robinson cried, in a despairing voice. "I found some peace here in this town, but when you came here I knew it would start all over again. I—"

"The man's raving crazy," Shawn said.

"He is and he isn't," a voice said in the doorway. It was Watson Craig. He looked like a ghost of himself. "There was a blackmailer, all right, but she's dead. You thought you'd killed the wrong person, didn't you, Robinson? But you didn't. Emily Vardon was the blackmailer."

"But you, Watson!" Shawn said. "You were the one who—"

Craig shook his head. "Emily," he said. His mouth turned down bitterly. "Dear, devoted, selfless Emily. Everybody knew that you were her life, Shawn. She lived through serving you." He laughed. "She hated you. She hated everyone. She wanted to be what you were—adored by the whole world. She couldn't—not with that face. But she could have power. She could be the god in the machine—pull the strings behind the scenes. She didn't need the money, you understand. You provided her with everything she needed. But she wanted power—power over anyone."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Craig turned his head wearily to Robinson. "I don't know how she found out about your mistake, Doctor. It doesn't really matter. It was pulling the string that controlled your life that gave her pleasure—you and heaven knows how many other people, big and small, in Hollywood."

"But it was you who blackmailed me, Watson," Shawn said.

He shook his head. "That was Emily's greatest triumph. She was your slave. What greater satisfaction could she have than to control *your* life? She knew you had been a witness to a hit-and-run accident and that you hadn't come forward with your evidence."

Dick blurted out the question. "Shawn—you ran away from an accident?"

Shawn's voice was lifeless. "It was a crowded intersection in Hollywood. I saw an accident happen. There were a dozen other witnesses. They didn't need my testimony." She shook her head. "I was getting real Hollywood in those days—you get to think of nothing but your own career—what any kind of sensational publicity can do to it. But they didn't need me!" She seemed to be pleading for Dick's understanding.

"Your testimony wasn't needed," Craig said, "but if it had come out much later that you'd deliberately kept from being involved, you'd have found out what bad publicity could do. Emily knew this. But she couldn't approach you or you'd have known the truth about her. I was her stooge. I, a struggling extra, hoping for a break. She gave me the information, and said that if I held it over your head I could get what I wanted. I fell for it—the Hollywood version of the Faust legend! I'd sold out to a devil—I had to dance attendance on her, whatever she asked, shameful, menial things—"

"But I saw Shawn Daly go to the special mailbox in Hollywood where I'd just made a payment!" Robinson cried.

"There was a special mailbox," Craig said. "It was used for fan mail—and also for Emily's purposes. She read all the mail. She answered it all. There was no risk. Shawn probably picked up the mail the day you were waiting to see who your blackmailer was."

Robinson sank down into one of the straight-backed chairs at the dressing table, covering his face with a shaking hand. The naked electric-light bulbs framing the mirror seemed to sharpen the lines and shadows on his face as if they were seen through a jeweler's eyepiece.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Five years," he muttered. "Five years, and all the time I thought it was you, Miss Daly!"

Then Robinson spoke earnestly, like a patient adult trying to explain something to a child. "Medicine isn't something you go into for a lark. If you just think it would be 'nice' to be a doctor, you don't survive the first year of medical school. You struggle, you fight to stay with it, and you come out of it dedicated. Some men want money—they specialize, they go after the rich hypochondriacs, they provide expensive treatments for imaginary ills. I was a doctor!"

He let out a long breath. "Like most young doctors I confronted an age-old problem of medical ethics—the incurable patient suffering unendurably. "She was young—a sweet, brave kid. The drugs I gave her to kill the pain might have been so much water. I suddenly couldn't bear the sight of her suffering. I gave her a risky overdose. What did it matter? She would die soon anyway. Well—" and he held a long pause "—she died from the overdose. Malpractice, loss of license, if it was revealed. And the very next day a letter, threatening disclosure if I didn't follow instructions."

"But how could Emily have known?" Shawn asked.

"She had her little army of paid spies," Craig said. "Hatcheck girls in night clubs, powder room attendants, receptionists in big offices. Probably some poor underpaid hospital orderly who wanted to make a fast buck."

"I was a doctor!" Robinson said sharply. "I felt no particular private guilt, but if I could lose everything I'd struggled so hard to get—well, I paid. It was very shrewdly calculated—the amount. It was as if she knew my exact income. She left me just enough to live on. I—I finally knew I couldn't go on with it. Came a payment day and I went to the post office and watched for the person who got the mail from the special box. It was Miss Daly!

"I left Hollywood and came East, set up a practice here. All the time I went on paying. Then I heard Miss Daly was coming here to do a play. I thought you would see I was doing better than you knew, Miss Daly. I thought you would up the ante! I decided I couldn't go on with it. That I had to put an end to it. I thought of trying to talk to you privately first. But I knew you had no heart—I mean the blackmailer, of course. So I thought I would frighten you.

"I waited and watched. This afternoon I saw you going into the theater alone. I thought it was you, but of course it was Emily

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vardon. I decided that was my opportunity. I crossed the field in back of the theater and went in through the stage door. There you were—I thought—sitting in that armchair on the stage, your back to me. I knew, I suddenly knew there was no point in talk. I had to end it. I was standing right by the water cooler and I saw the icepick there. I took it and slipped up behind her. The music covered any slight sound I might have made."

Robinson's lips trembled. "I knew just where to drive the icepick into her back. I went around front to look at her and my heart nearly stopped. It wasn't you, Miss Daly. Emily Vardon's eyes were wide-open, looking at me. She tried to speak. Then that blasted record player stuck in the groove, I had to get out of there because I heard someone coming from the workshop. I went across the fields to my office. I knew they'd call me.

"When I got word I came quickly. She was unconscious. I had to be alone with her for a minute. I had to make sure she never came to and identified me. I persuaded all of you to leave her while I called for an ambulance. It seemed so clever. Quite natural for me to go back to my patient to wait." Robinson drew another deep breath.

"It was a hammer, Mr. Loring, as you guessed. I killed her with it and put the hammer in my medical bag. No one would suspect me, I was sure. They'd think the murderer had slipped out one of the back doors. I never dreamed you might have bolted them. It made a pretty puzzle, but still I thought I was safe—safe to do the job I'd failed to do. Because I was certain, Miss Daly, *you'd* know that I must be the killer. I had to get you before you added murder to the other thing you were holding over my head."

His voice trailed off. They all stared at him in silence. Finally he raised his eyes and looked around at them with a twisted smile.

"I was a doctor! I was dedicated to saving life, not taking it. There is no way to play God and survive. We weren't meant to be gods—we were meant to be men!"

They took Robinson away after that. There was no more rehearsal. Dick walked slowly up to the actors' residence with Shawn clinging to his arm.

"There was wonderful news you had to tell me, Shawn. Remember?"

She shook her head. "It was Craig," she said. "I'd been paying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

off in terms of helping him with his career. Somehow, today in rehearsal, I couldn't take it any more. I saw all those other people in the company, so earnest, so hard-working, so real. I was cheap and soiled and without any respect left for myself. I knew I had to get rid of him or throw in the towel."

She stopped and faced Dick in the pale moonlight. "I went up to the Inn and phoned the Hollywood police. I told them about holding back my evidence in that hit-and-run case. The case is closed, the driver long since punished. They told me I'd been a bad girl—but to forget it. They had no special desire to make trouble for me. I was free. That was my wonderful news, Dick. I was rid of Watson Craig."

"But you're not free," Dick said. He touched that lovely red hair, then he pulled her toward him.

"Not free?" Shawn smiled.

"There's me," he said, and took in his arms the woman he had loved for fifteen years.

"Q"

NEXT MONTH . . .

14 ***NEW*** stories—including

MICHAEL GILBERT (about Petrella)

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Captain Leopold)

JACK RITCHIE (about a tomato caper)

CHRISTIANNA BRAND (about a case of deception)

THOMAS WALSH (about Mr. Bountiful)

The August issue of EQMM will be on sale June 30

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* suspense story by

THOMAS WALSH

"Way the world goes, Harry—dog eat dog."

"Only we're not supposed to be dogs," McCormick said. "We're supposed to be human beings, aren't we? There's the difference."

It's a question that applies to more than deer hunting. And the "difference" may be all that matters in this world of unrelenting tensions and pressures . . .

THE KILLER INSTINCT

by *THOMAS WALSH*

One moment it was not anywhere within Harry McCormick's sight. The next, without a sound, as if magically, it had appeared over on the other side of the trail. In the gloom there he could make out the warm reddish-brown color, the placidly flowing steam from its nostrils, and the magnificently upraised antlers. It was not excited or alarmed, apparently. It could not have sensed him.

Slowly and quite calmly it gazed around from that vantage point. Then in the same manner—or even, McCormick thought, with an air of gracefully elegant nobility—it came down toward him, toward the path, through the thin November snow that had fallen a bit earlier that afternoon.

McCormick was waiting where Art Jelinek had told him to wait. "Sometimes, late in the afternoon, they come back," Jelinek had said. "In the morning they part company, Harry, the doe going one way, the buck another. But a lot of times when it gets dark, he'll come back and pick up her trail again. They want a little company for the night, I suppose. So you wait right here behind these bushes. Don't smoke, don't move around, don't make a

© *1977 by Thomas Walsh.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sound. I'll go around the next turn in the path and do the same thing. We might as well try our luck today right here."

So the moment had arrived, and Harry McCormick had assumed he would be ready for it. But there was one problem—that he did not feel, not in any way, what he had thought he would. All at once there was something new and entirely unexpected in him, and he did not move so much as a finger. The thing was impossible to do. What he looked at—perfect in function, in appearance, and in the perfect place that someone or other had created for it—was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

Now it paused no more than 30 feet away, bending its head to sniff delicately at the doe's footprints. McCormick could hear that. Then, after gazing calmly right and left into the woods, it moved off toward the turn in the path, toward Jelinek—and McCormick still sat with the hunting rifle across his knees, as if frozen there by the sudden realization that this was the buck's place, after all, and not his.

He had not even the thought to fire at it. He could not have explained why. Long shadows darkened the woods, and there was no sound but the desolate whisper of a lonely autumn wind in the tree branches. But what McCormick had begun to feel, if he could have put it into words, was that to use his rifle here was a profane act he must not commit. He could have placed his shot. In the department he had a rating as sharpshooter. But all he actually did was to sit motionless on the rock under him, his unlit pipe in one hand, and remain that way for another few seconds.

What he felt was not buck fever. He was not jumpy in any way. He was held, rather, by a new and queer impression—that Harry McCormick was the savage, the intruder here, that he was in a place not made or intended for him, and that, knowing it now and beyond question, he must not do anything to harm or even harass. My God, he was thinking numbly. Magnificent. Who could ever think of—

There was a mad yell from around the turn, a shot, and a second shot. A slight painful grin twisted McCormick's lips and he got up slowly, rifle under his arm, barrel down. Even more slowly he walked to the turn in the path, not wanting to, and saw Jelinek and the buck before him.

"What the hell was the matter?" Jelinek shouted jubilantly at him. "It came right down the trail to me. Didn't you see it, Harry? Where were you?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Right there," McCormick said. "Right where you told me. I saw it."

But of course there was nothing to be done then, nothing at all. The buck was down in the snow, in some broken bushes. It was still alive, Art Jelinek not being the shot that McCormick was, and jerked its head around to them with blind effort, breathing stertorously. There was just a little light in the Adirondack woods now, a dark gray light; but McCormick could see the eyes as it attempted to thrash itself up onto its feet. They fixed on him. It seemed to McCormick that they accused him, in some manner. They were bright, agonized, bewildered, and despairing.

McCormick, after that first glance and not looking back, walked by carefully. He was thinking of one or two minutes ago, and of now. His jaw muscles were vibrating delicately, and he knew that if he spoke so much as another word he would have hit Jelinek. He went on, doing the sensible thing. He walked back through the November silence and dimness, through the heavy lion smell of the woods in autumn, to where Jelinek's car was parked just off the state highway.

"But you've got to expect that," Jelinek attempted to comfort him that night at the motel with condescending superiority. "Your first time up here—so what the hell. Might happen to anybody. A little buck fever, that's all. You kind of froze up, Harry."

"No, it wasn't that," McCormick said, beginning to sip irritably at his bourbon and water. "I just felt that we don't belong up here, Art, or at least for this reason. He did."

"Don't know exactly what you're trying to say," Jelinek protested. "Way the world goes, Harry—dog eat dog."

"Only we're not supposed to be dogs," McCormick said, even more irritably pushing his glass to one side. "We're supposed to be human beings, aren't we? There's the difference."

"What difference?" Jelinek said, again peering out happily at the dead buck strapped onto his car radiator. "The way I figure, if you ain't got the old killer instinct in you, at least when you need it, you ain't even a man. Look at Hitler. Look at them Japs. What do you figure would have happened to you and me thirty-five years ago if nobody had the guts to go out after them and shove it right down their throats?"

"I don't know," McCormick had to admit, "and I've often won-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dered, with the lovely world we seem to have made out of things. Justice and friendship all over, eh? Universal brotherhood, the beginning of the millennium, whatever the hell that is. But maybe, just maybe, Art, if every one of us didn't have that old killer instinct, we might do a lot better."

"Boy," Jelinek said, shaking his head humorously at such nonsense. "Do you ever have crazy ideas. But what the hell. Guess I got mine, Harry. How about starting back home in the morning?"

So they did. Jelinek was still proud of the dead buck, and when they stopped for gas he explained about it in full detail to the serviceman, meanwhile resting a proprietary hand on one of the antlers. At about eleven o'clock, on a lonely stretch of road just before the Northway, they came upon a big imported limousine drawn up on the grass, with its hood lifted and a uniformed chauffeur bent in over the motor. When he heard them coming, the chauffeur stepped out into the road and waved them down.

"I don't know what's the trouble," he said. "I think it's the ignition—it just keeps stalling on me. How about a ride to the next town, fellows? I'll have to get someone to service it."

"Why not?" Jelinek said. "Glad to oblige, Jack. Hop in."

"Thanks a million," the chauffeur said. He was a big man, McCormick noticed—arms, legs, shoulders, torso. His hands were enormous. He was so big that the whipcord uniform looked as if it was ready to split open on him. And yet, McCormick saw—the first odd thing—it was immaculately new. "Just wait till I leave my car in back of these trees. I wouldn't want some smart kid to come along and strip it down while I'm gone. The boss wouldn't like that at all. He's got a lot of stuff there in back."

Which was the second odd thing. His car started up like a charm. He circled it in back of the trees, where it was out of sight from the road, then opened the door on the passenger side and jerked his thumb. McCormick did not know much about the manners of uniformed chauffeurs, but it seemed to him a rather peculiar way for one to behave. A small boy got out of the car and the chauffeur took his hand.

"Had to pick him up at school this morning," the chauffeur explained affably. "The boss's kid. They want him at home for something. Him and me will just sit in back, huh? Better not leave him here all alone."

McCormick glanced down at a blue cap, a blue coat with six brass buttons, navy style, and a narrow tightly frozen face. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boy got in back, the chauffeur pushing him along with one of those enormous hands, and when Jelinek said, "Hi, Johnny. How are you?" the boy did not answer him.

There was something not quite right about the boy's expression. It seemed to be all drawn in on itself, every inch of it, as if he was called upon to confront an adult world which he did not understand yet and had no idea how to handle properly. He kept his two hands in his lap, clasped tightly. Only after they had started off again did it come to McCormick what the attitude and expression might mean in a six- or seven-year-old child—blind, almost overwhelming terror.

Jelinek had not noticed anything. Jelinek was the driver. But when McCormick turned his head for another look at the boy he found the chauffeur staring back at him with a shiny, mirthlessly sardonic gleam in the gray eyes, as if he might be just a little amused by something. "Yeah?" he said.

"Well, nothing," McCormick said. "Kind of funny, though, isn't it?"

"What's funny?" the chauffeur asked. "Just speak right up, pal. What strikes you?"

"Your car," McCormick said. "Ran like a top when you drove it back of those trees, I thought."

"Yeah, didn't it?" the chauffeur said. "Way it's been acting all morning, pal—off and on. What are you staring at the kid for?"

"I don't really know," McCormick said. "But he's kind of quiet, isn't he? What's the matter with him?"

The chauffeur rubbed his nose with one hand, grinning.

"Ask him yourself," he said. "But yes, sir, and no, sir—that's about all you can get out of him. Knows his manners, all right. Real polite, I'd call him. How about it, kid?"

"Yes, sir," the boy whispered. His hands were still clasped tightly. "But *you're not—you're not* Martin."

The chauffeur slipped an arm around him, still watching McCormick, and slapped the boy's face as if playfully.

"Now there," the chauffeur said. "What did I tell you? See? Who shot that big buck up front?"

"So who would you think?" Jelinek chortled, still exuberantly boisterous about his triumph over McCormick. "My friend here was dumb enough to let it walk right by him yesterday afternoon. Buck fever, I guess—but that's the way it hits them sometimes. No killer instinct."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What's that?" the chauffeur inquired lazily. He was still watching McCormick, and McCormick, not sure yet, but with the beginnings of a slow icy crawl up the back, was watching him.

"What's what?" Jelinek said.

"Well, what you were just talking about," the chauffeur said. "Killer instinct. So your friend ain't got it, huh? How about you?"

"Just look up ahead," Jelinek chortled again. "The second I see him—pam! Just about shot the damn head off his shoulders. While all Harry could do—"

"Wow!" the chauffeur said. Eye to eye still, he and McCormick; the child turned blindly away from them to the car window; Jelinek grinning happily to himself. "I guess you got it all right, pal—the old killer instinct. Ever try it with a man, though? That's the big kick."

"With a man?" Jelinek said. He caught then what McCormick had caught. His eyes, wide and startled, jumped up to the rear-view mirror to examine the chauffeur. "What's the angle, Jack? What are you talking about?"

"Knew a guy," the chauffeur said, never once taking his eyes from McCormick. But he had slipped one hand in under the whipcord jacket, in position for something; and McCormick, an instant too late, had a sudden and sickening idea as to what the position might be. McCormick was carrying a revolver too—department regulations, even when off duty; but it was up in a shoulder holster under his thick windbreaker, and it came to him that he and Jelinek were as helpless here as the child, even with two against one. The cold panic in him then was so sudden that he let it show, and the chauffeur, to let McCormick know that he had seen and understood, chuckled aloud.

"But that was years ago," he said, again drawling deliberately. "Hated all cops, this guy did. Just couldn't stand them. So they tell me that when he'd knocked off about a quart of old bourbon, he liked to get into his car and take a little ride for himself. Soon as he saw a cop, though, he'd pull over like he was asking for directions. 'Hey, officer,' he'd say, and when the dumb flatfoot came over and stuck his head in the window—pam, like you just put it yourself. Ran up quite a score like that, I heard. Detroit, Los Angeles, K.C.—all over. So how about that, pal? Killer instinct, you figure?"

Jelinek's eyes had narrowed.

"What I figure," he said, his heavy jaw showing itself, "is that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

maybe you ain't so damned funny as you seem to imagine, Jack. It just so happens that you're talking to a couple of New York City cops right here, and that Harry and I might decide to pull over at the next rest area for about five minutes and show you how funny you are. Want us to try?"

"Maybe later," the chauffeur said, the sly grin still lurking. "But not in a rest area, pal. Don't stop now until I tell you to stop. My lucky day, though. A couple of New York cops, huh?"

Jelinek shot a quick glance over at McCormick, but McCormick could only moisten his lips. It was too late then. The chauffeur, whistling softly through his teeth, slid his hand out from under his whipcord jacket, and showed them a .45 revolver.

"Well, well, well," he went on, as if now vastly amused. "Glad to meet up with you fellows. Really enjoying the company. Enjoying it so much that I guess we won't turn off at the next gas station, after all. You know what? I guess we just better push along nice and quiet now till we hit around Albany. Okay with you?"

McCormick had been on the force 13 years, and Jelinek 17. They each knew what they faced. In their rookie years they had heard many stories about psychopathic police killers—the kind of criminal who could not endure even the thought of authority but had to react against it at every opportunity with blind and insane violence.

This time they did not glance at each other. Jelinek, tightening his hands on the steering wheel, wet his lips quickly. McCormick stared straight ahead at the road. He was trying not to change his expression. The only thing to do now, he realized, was to drag the thing on and on as long as possible—and perhaps in the end, seizing on the first opportunity that offered itself, to turn the tables.

"Whatever you want," McCormick got out. "No argument at all, Jack. Whatever you tell us. Until we hit Albany then."

The chauffeur liked that. Jovially he slapped one of his big hands against the back of McCormick's head, knocking it forward like a rubber ball, and apparently with no effort.

"Tell you something," he went on then. "You seem like you got a good head on your shoulders, pal. You can size up the score right away. How about your killer friend, though? How about him?"

"Who, me?" Jelinek said. His thoughts must have followed McCormick's. He even managed to grin cockily, to show how tough, unafraid, and altogether unworried he was. "Why, sure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anything you say, Jack. You just tell us."

"Thought I did already," the chauffeur said. "But what I want you to do, fellows, is to behave yourselves like the kid here. Yes, sir, and no, sir. That's all. Got that?"

"Sure have." Jelinek nodded hurriedly. "But take it easy, will you? Just don't get excited, Jack. No sweat."

"Excited about what?" the chauffeur said, and McCormick heard the sly chuckle again. "No, no. Wouldn't even think of it. You fellows ain't nothing to me, not a thing. I have to blow a hole in each of you—well, I have to, that's all. Probably wouldn't even remember your faces afterward. You want to keep that in mind?"

"Right on," Jelinek nodded, returning a grin. But it was stupid of him. It turned his whole face into a mélange of wet paste.

And the chauffeur liked that. It offered him, McCormick understood, exactly what he wanted, what he had to have—the sense of a venomous and complete triumph over them. Jelinek was doing this the wrong way. Whatever he felt, the panic must not be permitted to show. Once it showed, the chauffeur would have achieved his end. So McCormick managed to keep his expression exactly what it was, even when the big hand slapped his head forward a second time.

"Now you," the chauffeur said. "What do you think, pal? You want to start practising how to say yes, sir, and no, sir, just like the kid here? You remember how it goes, kid?"

The boy, turning his head, stared numbly at McCormick.

"Yes, sir," he whispered.

"Like I said," McCormick murmured. "Anything you say, Jack. Yes, sir."

"There now—" the chauffeur said, and the chuckle was once more behind them. "See how easy it is? You're beginning to learn almost as quick as the kid, fellows. My lucky day, all right. I didn't even have any trouble at the school."

"Oh?" McCormick said. Keep him going, he remembered; the longer the better; wait your chance and then—"What school are you talking about?"

"Mount Marcy School," the chauffeur said. "Where all the rich kids go up here. I had it figured, all right. What would I need? The old man's limousine and the chauffeur's uniform, and I'd have it boxed. So I go up to the house this morning and tell the Limey butler I'm from the service station, to put the snow tires on—and he says go ahead and take the car then, they won't need it today.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Then down the road I put on the chauffeur's uniform, and they're just as dumb at the school. I tell them the old man wants him home, Robert Rossiter Parkman, Junior, and as soon as they see the car waiting they don't even call back to the Limey butler. Nothing to it, actually. The kid had more brains than any of them. The kid tries to pull back. 'You ain't Martin,' he says. 'Who are you?' And I says—but I kind of forget. How did I put it, kid?"

"You shoved me inside and twisted my arm," the child whispered. "Then you slapped me twice in the mouth, sir—to keep quiet."

"Yeah, I did, didn't I?" the chauffeur said. "That's right. Kind of slipped my mind for a minute. So I ditched the car then quick as I could—had to, of course, to get out of this part of the country—and flagged down a couple of dumb New York flatfeet that came along. But you know what, fellows? The kid ain't due home until four o'clock, and by that time I ought to be down around New York City, where I got a couple of friends waiting. So what's to worry about?"

"Maybe plenty," Jelinek gritted. "They're going to find the old man's car back there and when they do it won't take five minutes for them to figure out the whole story."

"Might be," the chauffeur admitted. "Why I drove it in like that off the road, pal. Remember? But I think it will be all right. I think it will be a hundred percent fine, even. Three hundred thousand bucks for the kid, right on the nail—that's what we're asking. How can we miss?"

"Maybe," Jelinek said grimly, "when you come to the real tricky part, Jack. The collection."

"No problem there," the chauffeur drawled. "Thought it all out, fellows. Toss a kid five dollars to pick up a package for me, then tail him all the way there and back. If nobody follows him, and believe me I'm going to make damned sure about that, then we're safe home. If they do—well, might have to even it up with little buster here. Breach of faith, they call it. But of course we might do that, anyway. Safest way out. He could remember me."

At that Jelinek could contain himself no longer.

"Damn murdering swine," McCormick heard breathlessly. "Telling us the whole thing, eh? Even sounds like you're proud of it."

But McCormick said nothing. The chauffeur wanted them to know, he understood. Only in that way would he enjoy a full and complete triumph over them. And the bad thing was that he had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

explained it. They could do nothing at all, which was exactly what the chauffeur wanted them to feel. They were absolutely helpless—and they were dead men. Because now that they *did* know—

Jelinek tried something. Little by little, mile by mile, he began inching up the speedometer. The Northway limit was 55 miles an hour, but soon Jelinek was 20 miles over that. He was hoping for a State Trooper to spot them, to pull them over. Then, maybe—

But now Jelinek's head was slapped and bounced forward the way McCormick's had been.

"Just slow down," the chauffeur ordered. "You're the law, fellows—so nice and easy now, just as a favor to me. And turn off at the next exit, huh? The sign there says it's one mile ahead."

Jelinek cleared his throat, again being just a little behind McCormick.

"What do you want us to turn off for?" he said. "I thought we were going to hit all the way down to Albany, Jack. You'll have to make time."

"Next exit," the chauffeur repeated softly.

Because now, McCormick felt, the chauffeur had got about everything he wanted from them. The next exit was going to be the end of the road for Jelinek and McCormick. There was no question about it. They knew; they could do nothing; and Jelinek showed a few beads of heavy sweat on his cheeks. He had them knowing now, afraid, inferior, helpless. Then why waste any more time on them? The game was over. They had served their usefulness by providing him with a car. And so now—

Jelinek had to slow up for the turn, and two or three other cars went by them—a young fellow and girl, sitting close together in the front seat of an old Chevy; an elegant young man with long hair and a brown beard racing by in a midget sports car; and a family group—Papa, Mama, kids, Grandma—chugging past in a battered station wagon. Then they were off on the exit road, McCormick seeming to float along on thin air, and without any kind of workable idea in his head. No chance yet, unfortunately, no chance at all. His ears rang. His heart pumped in a slow labored manner. It was Jelinek who tried something.

"You hear that?" Jelinek demanded, clearing his throat first. "Sounds like I'm getting a flat in that front left tire, Harry—the one we had all the trouble with coming up. Get out and take a look at it, will you?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But no. A round cold steel circle pressed into the center of McCormick's skull. He braced himself, one hand already out to the car door.

"I wouldn't," the chauffeur said. "Let's keep on going and take a chance, fellows. What I mean to do, soon as we come to a nice quiet place along here, is handcuff you back to back around a tree—so don't get too worried. See that dirt road up there? Good as any place else, I guess. Turn in, pal. Take it."

Jelinek took it. Like McCormick, Jelinek had no choice. Off the highway there was a cluster of shabby mobile homes, but after that there were only the woods. McCormick could see a smattering of snow under the trees, and then after a couple of low hills a rough circular turnaround where the road ended.

"I guess right here," the chauffeur said as Jelinek began to brake helplessly. "And you"—McCormick again was nudged gently by the revolver—"out. You walk five slow steps away from the car. Then you stand there. You don't move even a finger. You don't so much as look around, pal. You just stand there."

McCormick again floated. But they would not be handcuffed around a tree, he knew. Why should the man take a chance like that? They might be found and released, and if they were, the alarm would be out. Much better the other way. How had the chauffeur put it? He would not even remember their faces afterward.

So as ordered he took the five steps and halted. Before him there was a downward slope of the woods and at the bottom a small lake.

"All right," the chauffeur said behind him. "Your turn, pal"—obviously to Jelinek—"but don't get out on your side of the car. Slide over the seat and get out on his. Both together, huh?"

"Why?" Jelinek said. There was nothing to try, but he was still trying. "You don't want to lose your head, Jack. Look. Harry and I are good guys. There's no reason to—"

He must have been hit then. There was a sound behind McCormick, and he heard Jelinek stumble. "Hell," Jelinek groaned softly. Now the back of McCormick's legs felt iron-hard, but the back of his head wax-soft. Suddenly and desperately—nothing else for it now—he plunged down the embankment before him in a headlong mad dive, twisting and turning himself at the same time.

Snow stung his face. Bushes whipped and tore at his clothes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But even while rolling over and over he had got his hand in under his sweater and it closed thankfully around the butt of his big police revolver. Sky, earth, sky, earth, sky, earth danced around and over him, but when he came to rest at the bottom of the slope it was on his left arm and his left side, his revolver out.

It did him no good. Snow had dashed into his eyes, and agony tore at his right leg, kicking it sideways. Then there was another shot, not at him, and he saw Jelinek's tall burly figure crumple down on the brow of the road. At the same moment the chauffeur started after McCormick in great lunging strides, and McCormick fired at him, and fired again.

They were bad shots for Harry McCormick. They were, of course, hurried and panicky, and it seemed to him that the sky was still whirling. But they did one thing—they induced caution. The chauffeur ducked low, sheltering himself behind a big rock, and suddenly it became quiet—not a sound anywhere, it seemed to McCormick. But the child? At last he got a little sense into his head. He began shouting.

"Run," he heard himself yell. "Get out of that car, kid. Run!"

And now the chauffeur was between two horns. The child or McCormick? Which? But first things first, he must have decided—and so, just as McCormick had done a moment ago, he came down over the rock in a headlong dive. McCormick had just time for three more quick shots. Again he was wild. Then the chauffeur had landed on him, crushing him into the snow with all the impact of his 230 pounds.

Something happened to time at that moment. After quite a lot of it had gone by, or so McCormick thought, he found himself lying flat on his back, dazedly wiping blood from his face. Where was his gun? He got up groggily to one knee, groping for the gun, and crashed forward to roll end over end once more. This time when he came to rest he was facing the lake.

Far out on it, and running ahead desperately, was a small figure in a blue cap and a blue sailor's coat with brass buttons. Behind him, gaining with every step, was the chauffeur. But it was still only November, not yet full winter, and the lake ice could not have been frozen solidly. It carried the child easily enough. It could not carry the chauffeur.

So the next thing McCormick heard was a thin tearing crackle of sound, like the rip of cloth. And after it, all around the chauffeur, was not thin immaculate-white snow any more, but a rippl-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing dark circle with the chauffeur's two arms pawing madly at it. He got to the edge of the circle, but then it crumpled under him for the second time. He went down, came up again, and now had sense enough to support himself on the edge of the broken ice.

"Kid!" McCormick heard. "Shove that pole out, kid. It's right on the shore by you. Help me!"

The child had stopped on the shore. He had raised his hands and now they kept pushing back at the man, to fend him off. Never in his life would McCormick forget the small white face, twisted, the hands pushing, the terrified look in the boy's eyes.

In another moment the boy had turned away from the chauffeur and had begun to run again. What the chauffeur had wanted and perhaps enjoyed in the boy—the blind panic—was the only thing to which the boy could now react. Probably he did not even hear the chauffeur. He ran on and on. He fell. He got up and ran again.

Then McCormick heard one last desolate wild cry like that of an animal as the chauffeur tried foolishly to drag himself up and free. He did not succeed. Once his arm showed up to the elbow. The next time, groping futilely, it showed only as far as the wrist. McCormick ran and sprawled, ran and sprawled, but by the time he got around to the pole it was all over.

Then far out on the lake, still virgin and unspotted, was the white snow—and in the middle of it, placidly smooth and undisturbed now, a circle of dark water . . .

Weeks later, when Art Jelinek and Harry McCormick were fit for duty again, they discussed the thing one night in the squad room.

"All I hope," McCormick said devoutly, "is that you got your fill of the old killer instinct at last, Art. I admit I have. He was really something, wasn't he?"

"Don't even remind me," Jelinek groaned. "That fellow had the killer instinct all the way up to the top of his head. He would have killed us both, Harry. He *wanted* to kill us—and maybe the kid too. He would have enjoyed it, got his bangs. How in hell can anybody ever handle a psycho like that? Explain it to me, will you? What can you do with a man like that?"

"Not very much," McCormick had to agree. "There's only one thing in our favor, Art. It doesn't always work out for them. It didn't up there on the lake."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* crime-detective story by

RUTH RENDELL

It wasn't a blind date, but Nicholas Hawthorne's dinner with Annabel at Potters was definitely a mistake—in fact, it was a catastrophe, and it led Nicholas into a strange situation. Handsome is as handsome does, but even more relevant, honor is as honor does . . . Another of Ruth Rendell's perceptive studies of modern men . . .

DINNER AT POTTERS

by RUTH RENDELL

Everyone who makes a habit of dining out in London knows that Potters in Marylebone High Street is one of the most expensive of eating places. Nicholas Hawthorne, who usually dined in his rented room or in a steak house, was deceived by the humble-sounding name, and when Annabel said, "Let's go to Potters," he agreed quite happily.

It was the first time he had taken her out. She was a small pretty girl with very little to say for herself. In her little face her eyes looked huge and appealing—a flying fox face, Nicholas thought. She suggested they take a taxi to Potters "because it was difficult to find." Seeing that it was a large building and right in the middle of Marylebone High Street, Nicholas didn't think it would have been more difficult to find on foot than in a taxi, but he said nothing.

He was already wondering what this meal was going to cost, for Potters, he could see at once, far from being some sort of bistro or hamburger bar, was a grand and imposing restaurant. The windows were of that very clear but slightly warped glass that bespeaks age, and the doors of a dark red wood that looked as if it had been polished every day for 50 years. Because the curtains were drawn and the interior was not visible, it appeared as if they

© *1977 by Ruth Rendell.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were approaching some private residence, perhaps a rich man's townhouse.

Immediately inside the doors was a bar where three couples sat about in black leather chairs. A waiter took Annabel's coat and they were conducted to their table in the restaurant. Nicholas, though young, was perceptive. He had expected Annabel to be made as shy and awkward by this place as he was himself, but she seemed to have shed her diffidence with her coat. And when the waiter approached them with an armful of menus and wine lists, she said boldly to him that she would start with a pernod.

What was it all going to cost? Nicholas looked unhappily at the prices and was thankful he had his newly acquired credit card with him. Live now, pay later—but, oh God, he would still have to pay.

Annabel chose asparagus for her first course and roast grouse for her second. The grouse was the most expensive item on the menu. Nicholas selected vegetable soup and a pork chop. He asked her if she would like red or white wine, and she said one bottle wouldn't be enough, would it, so why not have one of each.

She didn't speak at all while they ate. He remembered reading in some poem or other how the poet marveled of a schoolmaster whose one small head could carry all he knew. Nicholas wondered how one small body could carry all Annabel ate. She devoured roast potatoes with her grouse and red cabbage and runner beans, and when she heard the waiter recommending braised artichokes to the people at the next table, she said she would have some of those too. He prayed she wouldn't want another course. But that fawning, insinuating waiter had to come up with the dessert cart.

"We have fresh strawberries, madam."

"In November?" said Annabel, breaking her silence. "How lovely."

Naturally she would have them. Drinking the dregs of his wine, Nicholas watched her eat the strawberries and cream and then call for a slice of chocolate gateau. He ordered coffee. Did sir and madam wish for a liqueur? Nicholas shook his head vehemently, but Annabel said she would have a green chartreuse. He knew that this was of all liqueurs the pearl—and necessarily the most expensive.

By now he was so frightened about the bill and so repelled by her concentrated eating and guzzling that he felt he had briefly to get away from her. It was plain she had come out with him only

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to stuff and drink herself into a stupor. He excused himself and went off in the direction of the men's room.

In order to reach it he had to pass across one end of the bar. The place was still half empty, but during the past hour—it was now nine o'clock—another couple had come in and were sitting at a table in the center of the floor. The man was middle-aged with thick silver hair and a lightly tanned, taut-skinned face. His right arm was round the shoulder of his companion, a very young, very pretty blonde girl, and he was whispering something in her ear.

Nicholas recognized the man at once as the chairman of the company for which his own father had been sales manager until, two years before, he had been dismissed on some specious pretext. The company was called Sorensen-McGill, and the silver-haired man was Julius Sorensen.

With all the fervor of a young man loyal to a beloved parent, Nicholas hated him. But Nicholas was a very young man, and it was beyond his strength to cut Sorensen. He muttered a stiff good evening and plunged for the men's room where he turned out his pockets, counted the notes in his wallet, and tried to calculate what he already owed to the credit-card company. If necessary, he would have to borrow from his father, though he would hate to do that, knowing as he did that his father had been living on a reduced income ever since that beast Sorensen had fired him. Borrow from his father, try and put off paying the rent for a month if he could, cut down on his smoking, maybe give it up altogether. . .

When he came out, feeling almost sick, Sorensen and the girl had moved farther apart from each other. They didn't look at him, and Nicholas too looked the other way.

Annabel was on her second green chartreuse and gobbling up petits fours. He had thought her face was like that of a flying fox, and now he remembered that flying fox is only a pretty name for a fruit bat. Eating a marzipan orange, she looked just like a rapacious little fruit bat. And she was very drunk.

"I feel ever so sleepy and strange," she said in a slurred voice. "I think I must be getting ill. Could you get the bill?"

It took Nicholas a long time to catch the waiter's eye, and when he did the man merely homed in on them with the coffee pot. Nicholas surprised himself with his own firmness. "I'd like the bill," he said in the tone of one who declares to higher authority that he who is about to die salutes thee.

In half a minute the waiter was back. Would Nicholas be so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good as to come with him and speak to the maître d'hotel? Nicholas nodded, dumfounded. What had happened? What had he done wrong? Annabel was slouching back in her chair, her big eyes half closed, a trickle of something orange dribbling out of the corner of her mouth. They were going to tell him to remove her, that she had disgraced the place, not to come here again. He followed the waiter, his hands clenched.

A huge man spoke to him, a man with the beak and the plumage of a king penguin. "Your bill has been paid, sir."

Nicholas stared. "I don't know what you mean."

"Your father paid it, sir. Those were my instructions—to tell you your father had paid your bill."

The relief was tremendous. He seemed to grow tall again and light and free. It was as if someone had given him a present of—well, what would it have been? Twenty pounds? And he understood at once. Sorensen had paid his bill and said he was his father. It was a little bit of compensation for what Sorensen had done in dismissing his father. He had paid out twenty pounds to show he meant well, to show that he wanted, in a small way, to make up for injustice.

Tall and free and masterful, Nicholas said, "Call me a taxi, please," and then he went and shook Annabel awake in quite a lordly way.

His euphoria lasted for nearly an hour, long after he had pushed the somnolent Annabel through her own front door, then climbed the stairs to the furnished room he rented and settled down to do the crossword in the evening paper. Things would have happened very differently if he hadn't started that crossword. *Twelve across: Bone in mixed byre goes with corruption (7 letters)* The I and the Y were already in. He got the answer after a few seconds—bribery. Rib in an anagram of byre. *Bribery.*

He laid down the paper and looked at the opposite wall. That which goes with corruption. How could he ever have been such a fool, such a naive innocent fool, as to suppose a man like Sorensen cared about injustice or ever gave a thought to wrongful dismissal or even believed for a moment he *could* have been wrong? Of course Sorensen hadn't been trying to make restitution, of course he hadn't paid that bill out of kindness and remorse. He had paid it as a bribe.

He had paid the bribe to shut his, Nicholas's, mouth because he didn't want anyone told that he had been out drinking with a girl,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

embracing a girl, who wasn't his wife. It was bribery, the bribery that went with corruption.

Once, about three years before, Nicholas had been with his parents to a party Sorensen had given for his staff, and Mrs. Sorensen had been the hostess. A brown-haired mousy little woman, he remembered her, and all of 45 which seemed like old age to him. Sorensen had paid that bill because he didn't want his wife to find out he had a girl friend young enough to be his daughter.

He had bought him, Nicholas thought, bribed and corrupted him with his money—or tried to. Because he wasn't going to succeed. He needn't think he could kick the Hawthorne family around any more. Once was enough.

It had been nice thinking that he hadn't, after all, wasted half a week's wages on that horrible girl, but honor was more important. Honour, surely, means sacrificing material things for a principle. Nicholas had a bad night because he kept waking up and thinking of all the good things he would have to go short of during the next few weeks on account of his honor. Nevertheless, by the morning his resolve was fixed. Making sure he had his check book with him, he went off to work.

Several hours passed, though, before he could get together the courage necessary to phone Sorensen-McGill. What was he going to do if Sorensen refused to see him? If only he had a nice fat bank account with a safe hundred or two in it, he could make the grand gesture and send Sorensen a blank check accompanied by a curt and contemptuous letter.

The telephonist who used to answer him in the days when he sometimes phoned his father at work answered him now. "Sorensen-McGill. Can I help you?"

His voice rather hoarse, Nicholas asked if he could have an appointment with Mr. Sorensen that day on a matter of urgency. The girl came back, and he was sure she was going to say no.

"Mr. Sorensen asks if one o'clock will suit you?"

On his lunch hour? Of course it would. But what on earth could have induced Sorensen to sacrifice one of those fat expense-account lunches just to see him? Nicholas set off for Berkeley Square, wondering just what was making the man so forthcoming. A weak hopeful little voice inside him began once again putting up those arguments which, on the previous evening, the voice of common sense had so decisively refuted.

Perhaps Sorensen really meant well, and when Nicholas got

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there he would tell him the paying of the bill had been no bribery but just a way of making a present to the son of a once-valued employee. The pretty girl could have been Sorensen's daughter. Nicholas had no idea if the man had any children. He might have a daughter. No corruption then, no betrayal of his honor, no need to give up cigarettes or borrow from his father or abuse himself before his landlord. . .

They knew him at Sorensen-McGill. He had been there with his father, and, besides, he resembled his father. The pretty blonde girl hadn't looked in the least like Sorensen. A secretary showed him into the managing director's office. Sorensen was sitting in a yellow leather chair behind a rosewood desk with an inlaid yellow leather top. There were Modigliani-like murals on the wall behind him, and on the desk an agate ashtray, stacked with stubs, which the secretary replaced with a clean one.

"Hello, Nicholas," said Sorensen. He didn't smile. "Sit down." The only other chair in the room was one of those low-slung affairs made of canvas hung on a metal frame, rather like a glorified deckchair. Beside it was a black-glass coffee table on which lay a glossy magazine open at the centerfold of a nude girl. There are some people who know how to put others at their ease, and there are those who know how to put others in difficulties. Nicholas sat down, right down—about three inches from the floor.

Sorensen lit a cigarette. He didn't offer the box. He looked at Nicholas and then he moved his head slowly from side to side. At last he said, "I suppose I should have expected this."

Nicholas opened his mouth to speak, but Sorensen put up his hand. "No, you can have your say in a minute." Suddenly his tone became hard and brisk. "The girl you saw me with last night was someone who—not to put too fine a point on it—I picked up in a bar. I have never seen her before, I shall never see her again, but I don't even know her last name. She is not, in any sense of the words, a girl friend or mistress. Wait," he said as Nicholas again tried to interrupt. "Let me finish. My wife, however, is not a well woman. She is at present staying with her mother in the country. Were she to find out where I was last night and whom I was with, she would doubtless be very distressed and become ill again. I refer, of course, to mental illness. But. . ."

Sorensen drew deeply on his cigarette. "But, all this being so, and whatever the consequences, I shall not on any account allow myself to be blackmailed. Is that understood? I paid for your din-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ner last night, and that is enough. I do not want my wife told about what you saw, but you may tell her and publish it to the whole world before I pay you another penny."

At the word blackmail Nicholas' heart had begun to pound. The blood rushed into his face. He had come to vindicate his honor and his motive had been foully misunderstood. In a thin choked voice he stuttered, "You've no business—it wasn't—why do you say things like that to me?"

"It's not a nice word, is it? But to call it anything else is merely semantics. You came, didn't you, to ask for a little more?"

Nicholas jumped up. "I came to give you your money back!"

"Aah!" It was a strange sound Sorensen made, old and urbane, cynical yet wondering. He crushed out his cigarette. "I see," he said. "Youth is moralistic. Inexperience is puritanical. You'll tell her, anyway, because you can't be bought, is that it?"

"No, I can't be bought." Nicholas was trembling. He put his hands flat down on Sorensen's desk, but they still shook. "I'll never tell anyone what I saw, I promise you that. But I can't let you pay for my dinner and—and pretend to be my father!" Tears were pricking the backs of his eyes, and he was terrified the tears would begin to fall.

"Oh, sit down, sit down. If you aren't going to blackmail me and your lips are sealed, what the hell did you come here for? A social call? A man-to-man chat about the ladies we took out last night? Your family aren't exactly my favorite companions, you know."

Nicholas retreated a little. He felt the man's power. It was the power of money, and the power that is achieved by always having had money. There was something he hadn't ever before noticed about Sorensen but which he suddenly noticed now. Sorensen looked as if he were made of metal, his skin of copper, his hair of silver, his suit of pewter.

And then the mist in Nicholas' eyes stopped him seeing anything but a blur. "How much was my bill?" he managed to say.

"Oh, for God's sake."

A mammoth effort of will kept the tears where they were, still held within his eyelids. "How much?"

"Thirty-four pounds, fifty," said Sorensen, and he sounded amused.

To Nicholas it was a small fortune. The shock hit him as if Sorensen had struck him in the face with one of those metal hands. But he moved back to the desk and leaned over it, got out

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his check book and wrote, *J. Sorensen, thirty-four pounds, fifty,* while iron eyes watched him.

"There's your money." Pride steadied the hand that passed the check across the desk. "I'll keep my promise."

Sorensen laughed. He looked at the check and the shaky writing. He tore it up and dropped the pieces in the wastebasket.

"You can go now. You're a very tiresome boy. I don't want you on my premises. Get out."

Even then Nicholas would have forgiven him if Sorensen hadn't seen him cry. But on the young face the tears spilled over while on the old one a broad delighted smile etched long lines and cracks on the brown shiny skin. Nicholas turned and walked out, passing as he marched mechanically through the series of rooms only one indifferent girl who kept her back to him.

Two mornings later, reading his paper in the train, Nicholas' eye caught the hated name, the one name that currently made his pulse race and the adrenalin fly into his blood. At first he didn't think it referred to "his" Sorensen—and then he knew it did.

The headline read: *Woman Found Dead in Wood. Murder of Tycoon's Wife.*

"The body of a woman," ran the story beneath, "was found last night in an abandoned car in Hatfield Forest in Hertfordshire. She had been strangled. The woman was today identified as Mrs. Winifred Sorensen, 45, of Eaton Place, Belgravia. She was the wife of Julius Sorensen, managing director of Sorensen-McGill, manufacturers of office equipment.

"Mrs. Sorensen had been staying with her mother, Mrs. Mary Clifford, at her home in Much Hadham. Mrs. Clifford said, 'My daughter had intended to stay with me for another two days. I was surprised when she said she would drive home to London on Tuesday evening.'

" 'I was not expecting my wife to come home on Tuesday,' said Mr. Sorensen. 'I had no idea she had left her mother's house until I phoned there yesterday. When I realized she was missing I immediately informed the police.'

"Police are treating the case as murder."

That poor woman, thought Nicholas, a nervous woman, neurotic and frightened. While she had been driving home to her husband, longing for him probably, needing his company and his comfort, he had been philandering with a girl he had picked up, a girl whose surname he didn't even know. He must now be overcome

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with remorse. Nicholas hoped it was biting, agonized remorse when Sorensen thought of what he had been doing, cheek to cheek with that girl, drinking with her, no doubt later sleeping with her—and what his wife had been doing, struggling against an attacker in a lonely place in the dark.

But Nicholas didn't think he could possibly be involved, and it was a shock to him to be accosted by two policemen when he arrived home that evening. They were waiting in a car outside his gate and they got out as he approached.

"Nothing to worry about, Mr. Hawthorne," said the older of them who introduced himself as a Detective Inspector. "Just a matter of routine inquiries. Perhaps you read about the death of a Mrs. Winifred Sorensen in the paper today?"

"Yes."

"May we come in?"

They followed him upstairs. What could they want of him? Nicholas sometimes read detective stories, and it occurred to him that, knowing perhaps of his tenuous connection with Sorensen-McGill, they would ask questions about Sorensen's character and domestic life. In that case they'd come to the right witness.

He could tell them all right. He could tell them why poor Mrs. Sorensen, jealous and suspicious perhaps, had suddenly taken it into her head to leave her mother's and drive home. Because she'd intended to catch her husband in the act. And she would have caught him—found him absent or maybe entertaining that girl in their home—only she'd never got there because some maniac had hitched a lift from her first. Oh, yes, he'd tell them!

In his room they sat down. They had to sit on the bed as there was only one chair.

"It's been established," said the Inspector, "that Mrs. Sorensen was killed between eight and eleven on Tuesday evening."

Nicholas nodded. He could hardly contain his excitement. What a shock it was going to be for them when he told them the truth about this supposedly respectable tycoon's private life! A split second later Nicholas was left deflated and staring.

"At nine o'clock that evening Mr. Julius Sorensen, her husband, was in a restaurant called Potters in Marylebone High Street, accompanied by a young lady." The Inspector paused. Then he said, "I believe you were also in that restaurant at that time?"

In a small voice Nicholas said, "Oh, yes. Yes, I was."

"On the following day, Mr. Hawthorne, you went to the offices

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Sorensen-McGill, where a conversation took place between you and Mr. Sorensen. Will you tell me what that conversation was about, please?"

"It was about my seeing him in Potters the night before. He wanted me to—"

"Just a moment, sir. I think I can guess why you are so obviously uneasy about all this. If I may say so without giving offense, you're a very young man, and young people are often a bit confused when it comes to questions of loyalty. Am I right?"

Mystified now, Nicholas just nodded.

"Your duty is plain. It's to tell the truth. Will you do that?"

"Yes, of course."

"Good. Did Mr. Sorensen try to bribe you?"

"Yes. I made him a promise."

"Which must carry no weight, Mr. Hawthorne. Let me repeat, Mrs. Sorensen was killed between eight and eleven. Mr. Sorensen has told us he was in Potters at nine, in the bar. The bar staff cannot remember him, the surname of the young lady he says he was with is unknown to him. According to him, you were there and you saw him." The Inspector glanced at his companion, then back to Nicholas. "Well, Mr. Hawthorne? This is a matter of the utmost seriousness."

Nicholas understood. Excitement welled in him once more, but he didn't show it. They would realize why he hesitated, why he was silent. Divided loyalty, the question of keeping faith.

At last he said, "I was in Potters from eight till about nine thirty." Carefully, still, he kept to the exact truth. "Mr. Sorensen and I discussed my being there when I kept my appointment with him on Wednesday and he—he paid the bill for my dinner."

"I see." How sharp were the Inspector's eyes! How much he thought he knew of youth and age, wisdom and naiveté, innocence and corruption! "Forget all about your promise," the Inspector said. "Did you see Mr. Sorensen in Potters on Tuesday evening?"

"I can't forget my promise," said Nicholas.

He hated Sorensen. The metal man with money and power had insulted his family and his honor and seen his tears. Nicholas had only to keep his promise and the police would charge Sorensen with murder.

"Come now, Mr. Hawthorne—" the Inspector began.

Nicholas didn't let him finish. Calmly, in a voice corrupt with sincerity, he said, "I didn't see him. Of course I didn't."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Rand story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

How many times can a person die? If the answer is "more than one time," then the answer flies in the face of reason and logic. But reason and logic are not always what they seem—especially at the beginning of a mystery story.

Once again Jeffery Rand, the former Double-C man, tries to retire. He had given up his duties as head of the Department of Concealed Communications, married Leila Gaad, and they had gone to Jerusalem for their honeymoon—which proves to be a "busman's holiday."

Dear Mr. Rand: You will get no sympathy from us. We don't want you to retire, either as a counterspy or as a detective. Carry on, Rand, old boy—and let Leila help you . . .

THE SPY WHO DIED TWICE

by *EDWARD D. HOCH*

Dark clouds hung ominously over the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem as Ferut hurried across the broad plaza toward the sacred Wailing Wall. In the middle of the afternoon, with the threat of rain hovering, there were few pilgrims at the Wall. He paused on the men's side to pick up a ritual skull-cap from the uniformed attendant in his glass booth, then crossed over toward the woven screen that separated the men's area from the women's.

At a point close to the screen, where the rough limestone blocks hid many narrow crevices, Ferut began to run his fingers over the folded pieces of paper tucked away there. The Jews believed that messages placed here went straight to God. But he knew of one paper, at least, which had a different destination.

He found it without difficulty and slipped it into his pocket, certain that none of the worshipers at the Wailing Wall had noticed

© *1977 by Edward D. Hoch.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anything unusual. Then he started back across the wide paved plaza. Before the Six-Day War there had been crowded houses here, and few Jews made their way through the Moroccan section to this reminder of Herod's reign. Now so many came to the Wall—Jews and foreigners alike—that an Egyptian like Ferut could pass unnoticed.

Still, there was always the feeling of unease, of being a spy in the enemy camp. Spy? He'd never thought of himself as a spy before. Spies were lurkers in alleys, men with short-wave radios and miniature cameras. He was not one of them. He was a simple courier.

But he knew he was a spy nonetheless.

He hurried along the plaza, walking faster as he saw a man in a black coat and hat heading to intercept him. Now what did that fool want?

Ferut tried to force his way past, but the men in black blocked his path and whispered, "Don't you recognize me?"

And then Ferut did, in the last instant of life, as the knife slid quickly between his ribs.

It was Jeffery Rand's first visit to Jerusalem. He had married Leila Gaad the week before in a quiet little London ceremony attended only by Hastings and a few others from British Intelligence. Rand's days with the Department of Concealed Communications were at an end, and if he was glad to be out of the business, he didn't regret a day of it. He especially didn't regret the Egyptian assignments during which he'd met and fallen in love with Leila Gaad.

When he asked Leila where she wanted to go for their honeymoon, he'd half expected her to suggest Egypt. The weather would still be warm there during the first week in November, and he knew she was longing for a return visit. But she'd surprised him by suggesting Jerusalem.

"I've always wanted to see it," she explained. "And being Egyptian—even half Egyptian—made travel difficult. It's not just the Arab-Jewish thing, but the whole status of women in my country. Travel abroad has always been difficult for us. Until quite recently a married Egyptian woman was not allowed to leave the country alone unless she presented written permission from her husband."

"Then Jerusalem it is," Rand said. "You're a proper British wife

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now, and you can travel anywhere you want."

It was their first real journey together. They'd boated on the Thames, and weekended in Scotland at the town where Leila's Scottish mother was born, but now they were going off as man and wife. Rand expected it to be a week of mingling with the sights and sounds of the many-faceted city. He expected almost anything except what actually happened.

They'd only been at their hotel an hour when he had a phone call from a man at the British Embassy. It was an urgent matter and could Rand come around there at once?

"Some problem with our passports," Leila suggested. "They don't believe we're married."

"They better believe it!"

"Oh, go down and see what they want. I'm sure it's not serious."

"I'll be back soon," he promised.

But it was not to be quite so soon as he'd expected. At the British Embassy he was confronted by a civil servant who ushered him into an inner office. There, after a five-minute wait, he was greeted by a slim mustached man named Higgins. "Rupert Higgins, sir. Attached to the embassy staff."

Rand knew the type. He'd been one himself for a good many years. "Didn't Hastings tell you I'm retired? No more Double-C, no more cloak-and-dagger?"

"This is something special, sir. We heard you were in Jerusalem on holiday—"

"Honeymoon, actually."

"Sir?"

"Honeymoon, man! You're interrupting my honeymoon!"

"And I certainly apologize for that, Mr. Rand. But a man named Iban Ferut was stabbed to death this afternoon near the Wailing Wall." He showed Rand a photograph. "He's a well-known local Arab."

"What would an Arab be doing at a Jewish shrine?"

"I don't know, sir. But on his body we found a folded piece of paper—a message in cipher." He held out the paper to Rand.

"You must have people here who can decipher this," Rand said, gazing down at the number groupings. "Of course it could be a machine cipher, but if it was passed from hand to hand the chances are it's something simpler."

"Willing to give it a try with some of our people here?" Higgins asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No. I've told you I'm out of it. Why is this fellow Iban Ferut so important to British Intelligence?"

"He's not. He's a minor-league double agent who's been working both sides of the street for years. I'm sure both the Arabs and the Israelis are happy to be rid of him."

"Well then?"

Rupert Higgins sighed. "You see, Rand, this is a very special problem. Iban Ferut was stabbed to death at the Wailing Wall one week ago today."

"I thought you said it just happened."

"It did. He was stabbed to death again today, in the identical location. He's died twice within a period of one week."

Rand leaned forward, knowing he'd be late getting back to Leila. "You'd better tell me about it."

"Well, that's about all we know. Iban Ferut has been living in the Muslim Quarter with a Turkish woman named Izmit. A week ago he was stabbed to death near the Wailing Wall by a man wearing a black coat and hat—which is hardly unusual garb in the Jewish Quarter. The man escaped and Ferut was buried last Thursday."

"He was positively identified?"

"There were no fingerprints on file here in Jerusalem, but we all knew him. And the woman Izmit identified the body. There was no doubt about it—at least until today."

"What happened this time?"

"The same thing! Stabbed to death near the Wailing Wall by a man in black who escaped."

"It's simple enough," Rand said. "One of the dead men is not Ferut."

"But which one? And why were they killed?"

"That would seem to be a problem for the local police." Rand wondered how the British Embassy and a man like Higgins had got involved in the first place, but he knew better than to ask.

"You can do nothing with the cipher?"

Rand stared at the paper again. "Let me have a copy of it. I'll take it back to the hotel with me."

"You really don't want to work it out here with our people?"

"I really don't, old man. I'm on my honeymoon, remember?"

"Get back to me on this as soon as you can," he told Rand when he returned with the copy. "It could be important."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rand left the embassy full of questions. What was so urgent about a message found on a dead Arab who'd been a minor double agent at best? The only unusual thing about the man was that he seemed to have died twice.

A double agent who was murdered twice.

Once by each side?

He decided there was time to call on the woman named Izmit. He phoned back to Higgins at the embassy for her address. "Glad you've decided to help us," the man told him.

"I'm not helping anyone officially," Rand said. "Why wasn't Ferut buried until Thursday?"

"What?"

"You called him an Arab, but holding the body that long sounds like a Christian burial."

"I think actually he was Egyptian. Coptic, probably."

"I'll be in touch," Rand said and hung up.

He found Izmit's address in a little alley off the Via Dolorosa. At the top of a worn flight of steps a dark-haired young woman in a striped robe answered the door and scowled at him. "Are you more police?"

Her features were vaguely Middle-Eastern, and if someone identified her as Turkish, Rand wouldn't argue with it. But Leila's Scotch-Egyptian ancestry had given her much the same look. "Could I come in? I'm not with the police but I am interested in the death of Iban Ferut."

"Isn't it enough that he is dead? Must you torture me with your questions?"

"Did you see and identify the body yourself?"

"Yes."

"And this was a week ago?"

"Yes." Her face betrayed some uncertainty. "Why do you ask?"

"Because another man identified as Ferut was stabbed to death this afternoon. In the same place as your husband."

"He wasn't my husband," she corrected calmly. "And my identification was not at fault. Iban Ferut died one week ago."

"Do you have any idea who this latest victim could be? Did Iban have a brother?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"A twin brother, or even a non-twin bearing a strong resemblance to Iban, would seem the most likely explanation."

"I know nothing about his family. He never talked of them."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I see." Rand took the copy of the cipher message from his pocket. "Does this mean anything to you?"

"These numbers? No."

"Who was Iban working for?"

"He was unemployed at the time of his death. I was supporting us both with my pay."

"And what do you do?"

She smiled slightly. "I dance at the Café Bosporus. It is a form of belly dancing—as much as the law here will allow."

"Then Izmit is your stage name?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"It seems to be a Turkish version of *isthmus*, and the connection with the Bosporus is obvious. You are Turkish?"

"When it pleases me to be."

"Would you come with me to view the body of this latest Iban Ferut?"

"To what purpose? I buried him a week ago."

The woman was a stone wall. "All right," he said. "Thank you for your help."

At the door she asked, "Who did you say you were?"

"I work with Mr. Higgins at the British Embassy," he answered.

"Higgins. Yes." She seemed to know the name.

Rand left with the feeling that he hadn't got the right answers—perhaps because he hadn't known the right questions to ask.

Leila was waiting anxiously in their hotel room. "I was worried," she said simply.

"I wouldn't desert you on our honeymoon. They've just got a problem down there."

"Like the old days? That sort of problem?"

He took the copy of the cipher message from his pocket. "In a way, but I won't get too involved."

"Is there nowhere that we're safe from them?"

"Pretty soon they'll be convinced I'm retired." He was staring at the groupings of numbers. "Still, it is an interesting problem—almost as interesting as that time in Egypt when we—"

"Jeffery!" She took the paper from him and put it aside, bending down to kiss him on the lips. "There's time for that later."

He had to agree with her. . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the morning he was awakened by the ringing of the telephone, and it took him a few moments to recognize his surroundings. He reached across Leila's uncovered back to pick up the phone, and he wasn't at all surprised to hear Higgins on the other end.

"What say, Rand? Cracked that cipher yet?"

"Didn't get around to it, old boy."

"No matter. Our people made short work of it. Want to come down and take a look?"

Rand gazed down at Leila's smooth back. The phone hadn't awakened her. "I'll be down," he decided. Old habits died hard.

He left her a note and took a taxi to the British Embassy. Rupert Higgins was waiting in his office, smiling like a contented cat after a hearty meal. "Now we're really moving. We're onto something that will make them sit up and take notice back in London."

"What is it?"

Higgins passed the deciphered message across the desk. "The Russians are planning to field-test a new rocket launcher here. They're supplying it to Palestinian guerrilas for use against Jewish settlements. It's to have no identifying markings, of course, so if they should fall into Jewish hands the Russians couldn't be blamed."

"Seems an odd way to test a new weapon."

Higgins shrugged. "We've got the only war around, at the moment."

"Still, couldn't the Russians test it just as well back in their own country, under simulated conditions?"

"You know there's no equal to actual combat, Rand. The Spanish Civil War was the testing ground for a score of new weapons, the Korean War ushered in the jet fighter, and the Vietnam War proved the worth of the combat helicopter."

"But would the Russians really trust a major new weapon with untrained guerrilla forces?"

"The message says so. It says twelve of the new AK-66 rocket launchers will be delivered next week."

"You believe this was a message from the Russians to the guerrillas by way of Iban Ferut?"

"Yes."

Rand considered the possibilities. "What about the first message?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rupert Higgins looked puzzled. "What first message?"

"A week ago the first Iban Ferut was stabbed to death at the same place. The pattern suggests that he too was carrying a cipher message."

"Well, he wasn't."

"Strange," Rand remarked. "Were there any witnesses to the killing? Especially any witnesses near the Wailing Wall who might have seen both stabbings?"

"Oddly enough, there was one man who saw both killings, though at a distance. He's stationed in a glass booth to distribute skull-caps to men who need them."

"What's his name?"

"Jules Finewood. He's an American, actually. Moved over here a few years ago."

"Maybe I'll go see him," Rand said.

"What can he tell you?"

"Perhaps nothing. We'll see."

Rand went back to the hotel and found Leila brooding over breakfast. "Is this a preview of what our married life is to be like?" she asked.

He sat down opposite her and helped himself to a piece of toast. "Relax. Remember, you're the one who chose Jerusalem."

"I have a feeling the same thing would be happening in Hong Kong or Chicago."

"Hong Kong, perhaps. I have my doubts about Chicago."

"You're impossible!"

"Finish your coffee. I'm taking you to see the Wailing Wall this morning."

"A fitting place for the bride of Jeffery Rand!"

The broad plaza that sloped gently down to the Wall was crowded with tourists when Rand and Leila arrived. He had tried to fill her in with the history of the Wailing Wall, only to discover that her archeological background had given her far more knowledge than he had.

"It's fifty-eight feet high, and is the last remaining section of a retaining wall built by King Herod when he enlarged the site of King Solomon's temple. For religious Jews it is the holiest of holy places, a goal for their pilgrimage."

"You've been reading books," Rand said. "Here's where we separate. Women's side for you."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As he neared the Wall, Rand was struck by the quiet reverence of the pilgrims who had come here. The only sound was the low murmur of prayer, mingled with the occasional flapping of pigeons' wings as the birds came to rest in the crevices of the stone. Rand saw the folded messages tucked into some crevices—entreaties addressed directly to God—and he had a sudden wild notion of carrier pigeons winging the messages heavenward. He wondered if this was where Iban Ferut had found the message he'd carried to his death.

Rand walked over to the glass booth where the skull-caps were distributed. "Jules Finewood?" he asked the uniformed attendant.

"Over there. He's on his break."

Finewood was a stocky middle-aged man who spoke with a New York accent. "You want to see me? What about?"

"Those two killings you witnessed. I'm with the British Embassy here and we're investigating the circumstances."

"Damned strange if you ask me. It was like seeing a rerun of a bad movie, you know? Just a week apart, and the two guys looked enough alike to be twins."

"What about the killer?"

"Man in a long black coat, black hat, and beard. You see 'em by the hundreds around here."

"So it would be a good disguise."

"Yeah, I suppose so. Come to think of it, there was something odd about him. The first time, last week, I saw him waiting around. He came up to my booth and asked the time—but he asked it in Hebrew! I didn't think of it then, but if he was a Hasid, he probably would have spoken in Yiddish. The Hasidim consider Hebrew too sacred for daily use."

"So there's a good chance he wasn't what he looked like. Was it the same man the second time?"

"I only caught a glimpse of him yesterday. But he was dressed the same way."

"Did he do anything different after the stabbings?"

"The second time he ran away fast."

"And the first time?"

"There was nobody too close and he paused long enough to take something from the dead man's pocket. I figured he was stealing a wallet, but they found a wallet on the body."

"Could he have been leaving something instead of stealing it?"

"What would he leave?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I don't know," Rand admitted. "The wallet, perhaps, for identification—false identification."

"It looked to me like he was taking something." Finewood glanced at his watch. "I got to get back to my booth."

"Thanks for your help." Rand walked across to the women's side where Leila was waiting.

"What was all that talk?" she asked.

"Doing a favor for the British Embassy."

"You're still in it, aren't you?"

"Only temporarily. Come on, let's see a little of this city."

They toured the narrow alleys of the old city, then the modern section with its high-rise apartments and crowded streets. In the early evening they paused for a candlelit dinner at a restaurant near the King David Hotel. Then Rand suggested a drink at a little café called the Bosporus.

"Are you meeting someone?" Leila asked suspiciously.

"What gives you that idea?"

"The way you steered us down this street before you suggested a drink."

But she allowed herself to be ushered inside, and they settled down to watch a tame version of a belly dance. Izmit was the third dancer to perform and she was no better or worse than the others. Though she approached some tables in search of tips, she carefully avoided Rand. When she finished her dance and retreated backstage in a swirl of saffron veils, Rand excused himself. "You'll never understand this, but I have to see her for a moment."

"I'll bet you do."

He found Izmit undoing her veils in a musty dressing room. "Hello," she said, not at all surprised to see him. "Terrible show, isn't it? The authorities here are very hard on us. They allow nothing the least big suggestive."

"It's not bad," Rand said. "I've seen worse. Look, I need to ask you one question."

She smiled, looking a bit tired. "Men often come back here to ask me one question."

"Not this one. Who was Iban Ferut's contact in the Palestinian guerrilla movement?"

"What?"

"I think you understood the question. Will you answer it?"

"I know nothing of his business dealings."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's impossible to live with a man and not know something about him. I promise you I'll keep whatever you tell me in confidence."

She turned away, silent for a moment, and then said, "I loved Iban Ferut more than anyone I have ever known."

"Then help me avenge his murder."

"How do you know he was connected with them?"

"Ferut—the second Ferut—was carrying a cipher message to them. I have reason to believe the first Ferut was also carrying a message, which the killer stole."

There was another moment's silence before she finally said, very softly, "You should see a man named Razor, at the Inn of the Three Fates. Do not say I sent you."

Rand thanked her and went back to his table. Leila stared at him over her glass. "Now what?"

He reached out to take her hand. "One more day and it'll all be over—my part, at least. Will you give me that long?"

"All right, Jeffery. I suppose I always knew it would be like this."

"I'll make it up to you," he promised. "But right now I'd better get you back to the hotel. My next stop might not be a place for you."

"Have you forgotten that I swam the Nile and climbed a pyramid with you?"

"You weren't my wife then."

"Does that make a difference?"

"To me it does."

He took her back to the hotel and then set off alone for the Inn of the Three Fates. It proved to be not nearly so sinister as its name. The décor was more in the style of a London supper club than a Jerusalem inn, and even Razor was not the scar-faced, sinister man Rand had expected. He seemed to be the headwaiter, and he nodded knowingly when Rand mentioned Iban Ferut's name.

"He came here occasionally."

"Alone?"

"Yes—or with Izmit." He assumed that Rand knew the dancer.

"I'm interested in his contacts—the men for whom he worked."

"I know nothing about that," Razor said, spreading his beefy hands.

"I think you do."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Just who are you?" Razor asked.

Rand lowered his voice so it wouldn't carry to a nearby table of diners. "Look, I'm not interested in the guerrillas or any other group. I just want to find the man Ferut was working for."

Razor glanced at his watch. "I finish here in an hour. Meet me outside." He added, "Make sure you're alone."

Rand was waiting across the street at the appointed time. Now, near midnight, the area had settled into a somber silence. The lighting on the street was poor, and the few pedestrians, who were mainly Arabs, slouched along, their faces hidden by burnooses.

It was on such a street at such a time that Rand expected that someday he would die. The thought made him wish he'd brought along his gun, but who brings a gun on a honeymoon?

"I am here," a voice behind him said softly.

He whirled to face Razor, almost invisible in the shadows. "I was watching for you at the front door."

"Which is why I came out the back and circled the block."

"You see I'm alone."

"Yes."

"I want to know about Iban Ferut. I already know he was carrying messages between the Russians and the P.L.O. But I need to know his contacts. I need to know why he was killed, and who the second man was."

"The second man was Ferut too. It was Iban's brother, Hashi."

"Twins?"

"No, but they bore a striking resemblance to each other. It had served them well over the years."

"Double agent," Rand murmured, remembering what Higgins had told him. "Iban Ferut was a true double agent—there were two of him."

"Yes."

"And they worked for both sides interchangeably?"

"More or less, though there was sometimes a brotherly rivalry between them." Razor stepped a bit closer. "I tell you this because we too are anxious to find the man who murdered them. Whoever he is, he threatens our organization and our contacts with the Russians."

"You must have your suspicions."

Razor shrugged. "The Americans? The C.I.A.? It seems unlikely they'd bother themselves with small fry like Ferut. The Russians

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certainly wouldn't kill him, nor would the Palestine Liberation Organization."

"I assume you hired Hashi to take Iban's place as a courier after the first killing?"

"I do not hire anyone, Mr. Rand. That is done by others."

"And who will take Hashi's place next week? Or has the courier system been changed?"

Razor hesitated a moment. "Someone will take his place. Would you like to meet him?"

"Yes."

"Then come with me."

As Rand followed the man through the narrow streets of the Muslim Quarter, he was more convinced than ever that he was walking into a trap. Certainly the P.L.O. did not extend such courtesies to inquisitive strangers from the British Embassy as a matter of course. He thought about Leila, widowed on her honeymoon, and almost turned to run.

"Do not be afraid," Razor said, as if reading his thoughts. "No harm will come to you here as long as you are with me."

"I wish I could believe that."

Razor paused before a narrow doorway and motioned. "Wait inside here, off the street. I will return in a minute."

True to his word, he was back almost immediately. Rand followed him now through another doorway and down some stone steps to a basement room. Another man was seated at a table awaiting them, his face hidden by a scarf. Only a row of flickering candles lit the tiny low-ceilinged room.

"This is the man who has replaced Iban and Hashi Ferut," Razor announced.

The person at the table let the scarf fall away from his face, and Rand saw that it was the face in the photograph Higgins had shown him. It was the face of Iban Ferut, the man who'd already been murdered twice.

Razor smiled at the shock clearly visible on Rand's face. "No, it is not a ghost. This is Gamal Ferut, father of the two dead men."

Ferut held out his hand in a gesture of greeting and Rand accepted it. As the scarf dropped to reveal graying hair, he could see that this man was a generation older than the face in the photograph. But with the hair covered he might have been another brother. The desert sun had weathered the skin of his face to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point where any lines of age were almost unnoticeable.

"I think I understand now why you brought me here," Rand said. "You're afraid the killer will strike again when he sees Gamal."

Razor nodded. "As I told you, we too are anxious to find the murderer."

"How many people know of Ferut's father?"

"Only three in the organization. No one outside."

Rand looked at the older man for comment, but it was obvious he spoke no English. He stared at their faces, trying to follow the conversation as best he could. "All right," Rand decided. "I've an idea. When is the next message pickup at the Wailing Wall?"

"The day after tomorrow. Messages are left twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays."

"Then who went last Thursday? Hashi?"

Razor shook his head. "I went myself. Hashi was with the woman Izmit, seeing to his brother's burial."

"I see." Rand pondered a moment and then said, "Tomorrow I want Gamal to be seen in the Jewish Quarter. Keep his hair covered, or dye it black. I want people to notice him. I want the killer to see him. I'll give you a route I want him to follow. Then, on Thursday, I want him to go to the Wailing Wall for the message, just as his sons did."

"But—" Razor started to protest.

"I trusted you by coming here," Rand reminded him. "Now you must trust me."

It was nearly five in the morning by the time he returned to his hotel room. Though there was more than an hour before sunrise, he thought he could already detect a glow in the eastern sky.

Leila rolled over in the bed and mumbled something sleepy as he slid between the sheets. "Don't worry," he whispered, not knowing if she heard. "With luck it'll be all over on Thursday."

Gamal Ferut hurried across the broad plaza toward the Wailing Wall, looking neither to the right nor to the left. He paused on the men's side to pick up a ritual skull-cap from a uniformed attendent who stared at him as if he'd seen a ghost, then moved on with the pilgrims to the wall itself.

At a point close to the screen separating the men's and women's sections, where Razor had instructed him to look, he found a folded paper tucked among the others in the crevices of the Wall.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A glance was all he needed to confirm that this one bore groups of numbers rather than Hebrew characters. He tucked it into his pocket and started back up the gently sloping pavement.

He hurried along, walking faster as he saw a bearded man in a black coat and hat separate himself from a crowd of pilgrims and move to intercept him.

Ferut tried to force his way past, but the man in black faced him and whispered, "I thought I'd killed you already. This time I'll make sure!"

Ferut saw the blade of the dagger flash in the afternoon sun. Then, in a moment that was to remain frozen in his memory, he saw the Englishman Rand grab the black-garbed assassin and wrestle him to the ground.

"Now let's see what you really look like," Rand said, pinning the flailing arms to the ground and kicking the dagger out of reach.

The black hat and beard came away with one motion, and they were staring into the contorted face of the dancer, Izmit.

"You knew it was Izmit all along?" Rupert Higgins asked, after they'd taken her away.

They were standing with some local police officials near the spot where she'd been captured. Gamal Ferut had disappeared in the commotion. "I only suspected," Rand replied. "Of course Finewood in the booth there had spoken with the first murderer and identified him as being male, but the thought came to me that the two killings might be the work of two different people."

"Why was that?" Higgins asked.

"The first killer was after the cipher message, and stopped long enough to take it. The second killer did not. Now if the second killer didn't care about the message, it would seem there were lots better places to knife Hashi Ferut. Killing him at the Wailing Wall, as his brother had been killed a week earlier, accomplished only one objective—it linked the two crimes and made them seem the work of a single person."

"If Izmit didn't kill her lover, who did?"

"His brother Hashi, in what I suppose was some sort of rivalry connected with their work as double agents. Somehow Izmit learned the truth—probably by something Hashi let slip that day he came to help bury his brother. When she learned from Razor that Hashi was taking over the courier's job, she disguised herself and killed him the way he'd killed Iban."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And today?"

"When I established that no one outside the P.L.O. knew about Gamal Ferut and his striking resemblance to his two sons, I decided to lure the killer out again. I had Gamal make some stops around the city yesterday, including one at the Café Bosporus where Izmit danced. As I'd hoped, when she saw him she feared she'd killed the wrong man the other day and had another try at it today."

"But why did it have to be Izmit?"

"As I said, I wasn't sure till I pulled away that false beard. But it had to be someone who knew the schedule of the pickups at the Wall, and Izmit naturally did since she was living with Iban Ferut."

Higgins nodded. "Good work, Rand. You've cleared up what could have been a messy business."

Rand glanced at the Israeli police nearby and lowered his voice. "I suspect I got you out of a tight spot, Higgins, but I don't want to know the details."

"I—"

Rand held up a hand. "No. It's better if I don't know. But the police brought that cipher message to you, rather than work it out themselves. That means British Intelligence is into this Israeli-Palestinian thing up to its neck."

"We're trying to keep the peace," Higgins answered stiffly.

"I'd hate to think you put Hashi up to killing his brother so you'd have an inside track on intercepting those Russian messages."

Higgins bristled at his words. "The Soviet introduction of the AK-66 rocket launcher into this area is a crucial matter. If someone had to die—"

Rand interrupted him. He didn't want to hear any more. "Get out of it while you can, Higgins. That's what I did."

The man stared at him for just a moment, then looked away. "Thanks for everything you did, Rand."

Leila was waiting a block away. She took Rand's arm, looked into his eyes, and asked, "Is it really over now?"

"It's over."

"For good?"

"I certainly hope so."

They strolled together through the crowded afternoon streets, and talked about their future.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE to ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

You'll be glad that you did —month after month!

TO: ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE
P.O. Box 2600
Greenwich, CT 06930

☐ **Send me 7 issues of EQMM for ONLY $5.52 (regularly $8.17)**
- ☐ **payment enclosed.**
- ☐ **bill me.**

☐ **I prefer to double my savings! Send me 14 issues for $11.04.**
- ☐ **payment enclosed.**
- ☐ **bill me.**

(Canada, all other countries add 17¢ per issue)

name **(please print)**

address

city

state **zip**

Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery

H7G019

NOW IN IT'S 20th YEAR!

If you enjoy chilling and suspenseful entertainment, you should be reading—

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE!

Allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE
P. O. BOX 2640, GREENWICH CT 06830

☐ Send me 8 issues of AHMM for only $5.97

☐ Bill me ☐ Payment enclosed
(Canada, other countries $6.70)

Name

Address

City

State Zip

H7G019

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified MARKET PLACE

The rate per word for Classified Ads is $1.00 each insertion, minimum ad $15.00—payable in advance. Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. Space reservations close 1st of 3rd month preceding COVER date. Send order & remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Manager, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 229 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y. 10003.

ADDITIONAL INCOME

HOMEWORKERS! Stuff envelopes, make big money. Free details. Partridge, Buckfield Lane, Greenwich, CT 06830.

CIRCULAR mailers make $$$. So can you. Write: Lee, 1605 Santa Clara Dr. #8, Roseville, CA 95678.

$200 WEEKLY mailing circulars. Samples 25¢. Grahamco DPBX 99371, Tacoma, WA 98499.

ATHLETIC EQUIPMENT & BODY BUILDING

CAN colds be prevented by vitamin C? Your benefit: good health through case histories, charts. Details free. PRETTY THINGS & KNICKNACKS. 400 E. 33rd 3503 Chicago, IL 60616.

AUTHOR'S SERVICE

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK! Join our successful authors in a complete, reliable publishing program: publicity, advertising, promotion, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for fact-filled booklet and free manuscript report. Carlton Press, Dept. IOG. 84 Fifth Avenue, New York 10011.

BLUEPRINTS, PATTERNS & PLANS

NEW CRAFT PRINT CATALOG – Choose from over 100 great easy-to-build plans. Send $1.50 (completely refunded with your first order). BOAT BUILDER, (CP Div.)–229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

LARGE Catalog Free! Mystery-suspense books: Save to 70%. Spencer Books, P.O. Box 186, So. Laguna, CA 92677.

SPECIALISTS: Mystery—Detective Adventure, Fantasy, Science Fiction Hard Covered. Monthly Catalogues issued. Stephen's Book Service, P.O. Box 321, Kings Park, L.I., NY 11754.

PAPERBACKS—20¢ Up! Mystery, Romance, Western, Sci-fi, Gothic, Novels, Non-fiction, Sex . . . Free catalog. Bargain Books, Box 7041K, Richmond, Virginia 23221.

RENT a mystery! Send for details. FREE catalogues. Detective-Mystery Booksearch, Box 15460, Orlando, FL 32808.

SEND for free catalogs of mystery and detective fiction. Canford Book Corral, Box 216E, Freeville, NY 13068.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—(Cont'd)

FREE List! Used Hardcover Mystery-Detective Fiction. Dunn's Mysteries, 251 Baldwin Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450.

BOOKS Recent & Out Of Print. G & M Books, Pine Hill, Ogunquit, ME 03907.

LOVE a Mystery? Free Mystery-Detective book list. Mystery-House, Box 4235, Reading, PA 19606.

BRAND NEW—A quarterly science fiction magazine by Isaac Asimov. Send $5.40 for 4 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, 229 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10003.

BOOK Readers and Collectors! Send titles wanted to: S&S Books, 80 North Wilder, E-50, St. Paul, MN 55104.

TALES OF MYSTERY AND HORROR. Unusual privately-printed manuscript. $2.00. Beltane, Box 1055, Phila., PA 19105.

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE. Subscribe now! A quarterly journal of the mystery/detective/suspense genre. Now in its 10th year. $10.00 per year. Write TAD, Drawer P, Del Mar, CA 92014.

SCENE OF THE CRIME, The Mystery Bookshop. Catalog $1. 13636 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks, CA 91423. Ring-213-981-CLUE.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE Magnetic Signs. Big profits. Details, Universal, Lenora, KS 67645.

$30.00 HUNDRED Stuffing Our Circulars into Stamped Addressed Envelopes. Immediate Earnings. Beginners Kit $2.00 COLOSSI, 1433-61 Street, DC-6, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

HOMEWORK! BIG MONEY addressing, mailing envelopes. Exciting offer 10¢. Linco Services, 3636 Peterson, Chicago, 60659.

1000% PROFIT Bronzing Baby Shoes. Free Literature. NBC, Box 1904-DG, Sebring, FL 33870.

"MAKE $70,000 annually doing nothing. $15,000 guaranteed. Free details. Write: Dept. 7-11, RRI, 1817 North Hills Blvd., Knoxville, TN 37917.

FREE BOOK "20042 Unique, Proven Enterprises." Fabulous "Unknowns"! Work home! Haylings, Carlsbad, CA 92008.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—(Cont'd)

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE 100 LETTERS A DAY, EACH CONTAINING $2.00? WILL SEND COPY OF PLANS PLUS 6 FORMULAS FOR $2.00. RUSH $2.00 TO MELCOLE INC., P.O. BOX 64733, 5920 UNIVERSITY, DALLAS, TX 75206.

$3000.00 MONTHLY. Immediate income. Stuff envelopes at home. Information, send self-addressed stamped envelope. Cottage, Box 730-DFG, Baldwin Park, CA 91706.

$100 Day from $242 Machine. Brochure, Sample Product $1.00. Write, Coffman, 1973M Glenhaven, Abilene, Texas 79603.

AMAZING profits stuffing envelopes. Free details. Betza, R2-Box 102, Perryopolis, PA 15473.

NEW! Stuff our circulars for profit. Free details. Sunray, Box 778, Kaneohe, HI 96744.

400% profit. Sell books by mail. Write: Foster, Box 3563 Birmingham, AL 35211.

BUY IT WHOLESALE

UNIQUE books—new products! Catalog 25¢ (Refundable). Gargiul, Box 2009-D, Syracuse, New York 13220.

DETECTIVES

POLICE SECURITY INVESTIGATIVE schematics and equipment listings. Quimtronix, Box 548-DV, Seattle, WA 98111.

DO IT YOURSELF

MAKE YOUR OWN WILL. Complete Kit. Send $1.98. Margaret Emory, 410C Haven Lake Avenue, Milford, Delaware 19963.

SAVE $ on utilities, vans, homes. Solar Reflective film turns window glass into 2-way mirror. Reflects heat, glare 80%, provides privacy, easily applied. Water activated, any width and length. Silver, gold, gray, bronze. $1. per sq. ft. Send M.O. or C.O.D. Tracy Co., P.O. Box 28328, San Antonio, TX 78228.

FACTS about insulation. Save 100's on fuel and cooling bills. Send $3.50 for booklet on how to insulate ceiling, walls and floors of new construction or older homes. Mail to Geary, Wholesale Supply, MR1, Rt. 1, Box 95 Bloomfield, MO 63825.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

COLLEGE Degrees by mail, via Resume, Education, 256-D, South Robertson, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.

INFORMATIVE BOOKLET—"How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad. Send $1.50 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

SEND $5 for Handbag. Free catalog. Reing-Teitelbaum, 1165 East 54 Street, P.O. Box 130 Ryder St. Sta. Brooklyn, NY 11234.

LOW PRICED specialty items. GREAT as party favors, gifts etc. FREE details. CATALOG SALES, 7831 224th Northeast, Redmond, WA 98052.

HYPNOTISM

FREE Fascinating Hypnosis Information! Startling! DLMH, Box 487 Anaheim, CA 92805.

MISCELLANEOUS

BINGO. Why do others WIN and YOU lose? $2.00 for booklet of never before published method. Mari Publications, Dept. E177, Box 3819 Midland, TX 79702.

SOLAR ENERGY. For you? Free details. Box 5367-EQ, Austin, TX 78763.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

HOW to make money writing short paragraphs. Information free. Barrett, Dept. C-499-A, 6216 N. Clark, Chicago 60660.

FREE "1001 ODDS"! $10,000-$100,000 actually made at home! Never get over it! Publico, Carlsbad, CA 92008.

$3 Hourly stuffing envelopes. Easy work. Details free. Feldco, Box 228 Ryder, Brooklyn 11234.

$10.00 PROFIT on every $15.00 Sale. WRITE: PJ Mailorder 1593 Dufferin St. Toronto, Ontario M6H 3L5.

$500.00 WEEKLY! IMMEDIATE, Guaranteed home income stuffing envelopes. FREE Supplies! Send 25¢, Stamp. Profits, B725-DP7, Belen, NM 87002.

$3 HOURLY stuffing envelopes. Easy work. Free details. Pacific-IO, Box 657, Aberdeen, WA 98520.

$1000 MONTHLY POSSIBLE, mailing commission letters. Information—Free! OPPORTUNITIES Box 721D, Lynbrook, NY 11563.

$1,000.00 MONTHLY possible stuffing envelopes. National, P.O. Box 343, Randallstown, Maryland 21133.

AMAZING profits stuffing envelopes. Free details. Anthony, 459 Cove Rd., Pennsauken, NJ 08110.

$250.00 PROFIT / THOUSAND possible STUFFING MAILING ENVELOPES! Offer: Rush stamped addressed envelope—Kings-KDV X21487 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316.

$30.00 HUNDRED STUFFING our circulars into stamped addressed envelopes. Beginner's Kit $2.00. Mustachi, P.O. Box 46D7, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

COLLECT names for us. We pay $1.00 each. Instructions, $2.00. Pacific, Box 657, Aberdeen, WA 98520.

$250.00 profit/thousand possible-stuffing-mailing envelopes. Offer: Rush stamped addressed envelope: Universal-ADVS X16180 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

STUFF ENVELOPES $250 per thousand. Free supplies. Rush stamped addressed envelope. L/L Enterprises, Box 226-D, Danville, AL 35619.

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write A Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad in this publication. Send $1.50 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

$500.00 PROFIT Stuffing 1,000 envelopes. 25 Centts Details: Canapro Enterprises, Box 215C. *Station "H," Montreal, Que., Canada.*

I make $52,000 yearly mailing letters. Anyone can. Free proof. Sandco-DP, Ceres, CA 95307.

$1,000 MONTHLY possible stuffing envelopes. Free details. Upward, 15901 Lombardy, Turlock, CA 95380.

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Identity, Box 315-DC, Royal Oak, MI 48068.

JAPANESE introduction! Girl's photographs, descriptions, brochure, details. $1.00 INTER-PACIFIC, Box 304-SC, Birmingham, MI 48012.

DATES GALORE! Meet singles-anywhere. Call DATELINE, toll-free (800) 451-3245.

JAPANESE Girls Make Wonderful Wives. We have large number of listings. Many interested in marriage. Only $1.00 brings application, photos, names, descriptions, questionnaire, Etc. Japan International, Box 156-AA, Carnelian Bay, CA 95711.

BEAUTIFUL Mexican-Oriental girls Needing American Boy-Friends. Free Details, "actual" photos. World, Box 3876-DC, San Diego, CA 92103.

500 Ladies, 350 Men Photos Matrimonial Catalog, $1.00 Contactpartner: Box 12, Toronto, Canada M4A 2M8.

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE ZIP CODE. PLEASE USE IT IN YOUR CLASSIFIED AD.

PERSONAL—Cont'd

ARE you an Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie fan? Gardner-Christie Fan Club, Doug Thorsen, 2721 Cascade, Rockford, Illinois 61109, 1-815-874-4670.

LATIN AMERICAN GIRLS appreciate their men. Let us introduce you to a dark-eyed, unspoiled beauty. Complete application package and photo selection $2.00: Maria Garcia, Box 80801D, San Diego, Calif. 92138.

BEAUTIFUL MEXICAN GIRLS! Friendship, marriage. Photos information free! "Latins," Box 1716-DD, Chula Vista, CA 92012.

ADULT PRODUCTS. Giant Catalog $1.00 (Refundable). Trader Jack, 1045 Tabor Ave., Fairfield, CA 94533.

1000 LADIES PHOTOS matrimonial catalog $5.00. Intercontact Publishing, Box 737, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33302.

PHOTOGRAPHY-PHOTO FINISHING *& SUPPLIES*

SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS!!! Make your own S&M Densitometer. Send $3.00 for details, drawings and instructions. A must for successful photography in your darkroom. Order direct: S&M Instruments, Dept. EQ7, 229 Park Ave. South, N.Y. NY 10003.

PROFITABLE OCCUPATIONS

$70,000 ANNUALLY, doing nothing. $15,000 guaranteed. Free details. Dept-7, Imageneering, POB 6061-A, Knoxville, TN 37917.

RADIO-TV

FANTASTIC old radio programs on tape. Reels, cassettes, 8-track. Free introductory catalog. Radio Memories, Box 2297, Newport News, VA 23602.

SONGWRITERS

HOW TO write needed hit songs. Write: "Songs", 15915 E. Main, Suite C, La Puente, CA 91792.

SURPLUS EQUIPMENT

GIANT Bargain Packed Canadian Surplus Catalogs $1.00. Etco Electronics-DG, Box 741, Montreal "A."

TIPS FOR THE HOME, ETC.

PRACTICAL tips for home, garden and workshop are in "1001 How-To Ideas." Send $1.50 for your copy (includes postage) to 1001 How-To Ideas, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Francis...Garfield...Simenon...Deighton...more!

15 BRAND-NEW MYSTERIES FOR JUST $1.00

Think of it! You get the fifteen newly published thrillers listed at right—including the latest by Dick Francis and Brian Garfield—all fifteen for only $1.00. These books cost $113.25 in the original publishers' editions—but to introduce you to The Detective Book Club, we'll send you all of these great mysteries in five handsome hard-bound triple volumes for only $1.00.

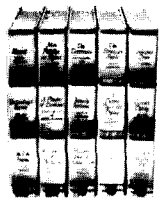
As a member, there is no minimum number of books you must buy. You may reject any volume before or after receiving it. And you may cancel your membership at any time, without penalty or hurt feelings.

SAVINGS OF $5 OR MORE ON EVERY MYSTERY YOU READ

When you accept a club selection, you get three complete, unabridged detective novels in one hard-cover triple-volume for only $4.39. That's $3, $4, or $5 less than one mystery costs in the publisher's original edition. The club's editors select the best from some 400 mystery books each year. Selections include new thrillers by all the names shown at the right plus Richard Lockridge, Anne Morice, and many more.

Send the post-paid card now to get your fifteen mysteries for $1. The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, New York 11576.

DICK FRANCIS In The Frame.	(Publ. Ed. $8.95)
BRIAN GARFIELD Recoil.	(Publ. Ed. $8.95)
MIGNON EBERHART Family Fortune.	(Publ. Ed. $7.95)
WILLIAM HAGGARD Yesterday's Enemy.	(Publ. Ed. $6.95)
DOROTHY GILMAN Mrs. Pollifax on Safari.	(Publ. Ed. $7.95)
JOHN CREASEY (as Gordon Ashe) A Plague of Demons.	(Publ. Ed. $6.95)
LEONARD HOLTON A Corner of Paradise.	(Publ. Ed. $5.95)
SJÖWALL AND WAHLÖÖ The Terrorists.	(Publ. Ed. $7.95)
GEORGES SIMENON Maigret and the Apparition.	(Publ. Ed. $7.95)
J. J. MARRIC Gideon's Drive.	(Publ. Ed. $6.95)
LILLIAN O'DONNELL Leisure Dying.	(Publ. Ed. $6.95)
LEN DEIGHTON Catch a Falling Spy.	(Publ. Ed. $7.95)
VELDA JOHNSTON The Etruscan Smile.	(Publ. Ed. $5.95)
JOHN D. MACDONALD A Purple Place for Dying.	(Publ. Ed. $7.95)
DONALD WESTLAKE A Travesty.	(Publ. Ed. $7.95)



Please enroll me as a member and send me at once my five triple-volumes shown here, containing fifteen mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for one week, then will either accept all five volumes for the special new member price of only $1, plus postage and handling, or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the club's monthly Preview which describes my next selections but I am not obligated to accept them. I will always have at least ten days to reject any volume by returning the form provided. I may return any book at the club's expense for full credit. For each monthly triple-volume I keep, I will send you only $4.39, plus postage and handling. I understand I may cancel my membership at any time.

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB, ROSLYN, N.Y. 11576

Name _____

Street _____

7-MO

City _____

16-55-7C

State _____ Zip _____

Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Ontario, offer slightly different in Canada.

MAIL THIS POSTAGE-FREE CARD TODAY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEWEST BY DICK FRANCIS, BRIAN GARFIELD, AND 13 OTHERS. ALL FOR $1

First Class
Permit No. 7
Roslyn, N.Y.

Business Reply Mail
No postage stamp necessary
if mailed in the United States
Postage will be paid by

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, N.Y. 11576

WORTH $113.25 IN PUBLISHERS' EDITIONS. DETAILS ON OTHER SIDE.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED